

Case 139. 47-year-old tree trimmer was killed when he was struck by a tree limb.

A 47-year-old male tree trimmer was killed when he was struck by a tree limb. A crew of five tree trimmers plus the homeowner for whom the limb trimming was being conducted were present at the time of the incident. A trimmer in a cherry picker was making cuts in the live cottonwood limb, which was 10 to 20 feet long and weighed between 1600 and 2000 pounds. He yelled "headache", the signal to warn the ground crew to clear the area, because he was ready to make the final cut. One end of a 150-foot long rope was attached to the limb. The other end was attached to a lowering device and was being held by a worker who controlled the speed of the limb's descent to the ground. When the final cut was made, the limb started to swing out. It then abruptly fell to the ground striking the deceased who was in the limb drop zone. The rope attached to the limb had snapped at approximately 60 feet in the air causing the limb to fall into the drop zone too quickly. The ends of the rope were observed to be frayed. The rope also showed evidence of friction burns and snags. 911 was called and the worker was pronounced deceased at the site.

MIOSHA General Industry Safety and Health Division issued the following Serious and Other-than-Serious citations:

SERIOUS

- PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT, PART 33.

PART 33, RULE 3308(2).

No written certification that the required workplace hazard assessment had been performed.

PART 33, RULE 3312(1).

Employees operating wood chippers, chainsaws, and other powered equipment were not wearing approved safety glasses.

SERIOUS

- TREE TRIMMING AND REMOVAL, PART 53.

PART 53, RULE 5313(2).

Employees were not wearing hard hats while working in areas that could expose them to falling branches.

PART 53, RULE 5311(a).

Employees had not received training in proper use of equipment and components around tree and limb felling areas. No training on standards. No training on hazards.

PART 53, RULE 5311(a).

No job briefing had been conducted before the tree job involving unusual hazards had begun.

PART 53, RULE 5311(c).

No rescue procedures had been developed.

PART 53, RULE 5311(B).

Employer allowed crew to use damaged 5/8-inch bull rope.

PART 53, RULE 5361(1).

No rope inspection for snags or friction burns had been done.

PART 53, RULE 5361(2).

Employer failed to replace defective rope.

OTHER-THAN-SERIOUS:

RECORDING AND REPORTING OF OCCUPATIONAL INJURIES AND ILLNESSES, PART OSH 11, RULE 1139(1).

Employer failed to report the death to the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth, MIOSHA within 8 hours.

INSPECTIONS AND INVESTIGATIONS, CITATIONS AND PROPOSED PENALTIES, PART OSH 13, RULE 1311(1).

The MIOSHA Notice to inform employees of the protections and obligations provided for in the Act was not posted.