

Case 402. 66-year-old owner of a tree trimming service died from injuries sustained when he fell from the bucket of bucket truck.

A 66-year-old male owner of a tree trimming service died from injuries sustained when he fell from the bucket of bucket truck. The decedent was trimming branches from a silver maple tree estimated to be 60 feet tall located in the backyard of a residence. He was operating an articulating boom bucket truck using the boom to “crane” the cut branches to the street, where the chipper was located. The incident involved a 15-foot long, 6-inch diameter branch. The decedent had tied a rope to this branch and the bucket. He was elevated approximately 14-20 feet, moving the branch to the chipper. The work crew indicated they heard a loud popping sound. The bucket tipped forward, causing the decedent to fall headfirst to cement. The decedent was not utilizing fall protection, but was wearing a hard hat, which came off of his head during the fall.

MIOSHA General Industry Safety and Health Division issued the following Serious citation to the employer at the conclusion of its investigation.

Serious: AERIAL WORK PLATFORMS, PART 58, RULE 408.15836(1):

The employer shall provide a safety harness that has a lanyard which is in compliance with construction safety standard Part 45. “Fall Protection”, [R 408.44501] to [R 408.44502] and which is affixed to attachment points provided and approved by the manufacturer. Any occupant of an aerial work platform described in [R 408.15802(a) and (c) and figures 1 and 3] shall use a safety harness. A fall arrest system shall only be used where the aerial lift is designed to withstand the vertical and lateral loads caused by an arrested fall.

(An employee operating from the boom bucket of an aerial work platform did not use a fall arrest system during tree trimming operations at a residential location.)