

Case 438. 40-year-old tree trimmer died when he fell approximately 40 feet from a tree.

A 40-year-old Hispanic male tree trimmer died when he fell approximately 40 feet from a tree. The decedent was working aloft trimming and removing vines from an oak tree at a residential property using a chain saw, pole saw and a hand saw. During the activity, it appears that the decedent inadvertently cut his ½-inch climbing rope in half with his hand saw approximately 12 inches from his saddle harness, causing him to fall approximately 40 feet to the ground. They found the decedent on the ground with his chainsaw idling. Responding police found the blue climbing rope fibers on the hand saw teeth; no fibers were found on the chain saw teeth. Responding police also noted that the decedent was “equipped with a secondary safety harness consisting of a white rope with yellow marking and 3 carabineers”, referred to as a “buck strap”. Responding police noted that the buck strap appeared to not have been in use by the decedent at the time of the fall as all carabineers were in a storage position still hooked to a ring on his harness. The decedent was not wearing a helmet at the time of the fall. The incident was unwitnessed. The decedent was found by a coworker who then called for emergency response. The decedent was declared dead at the scene.

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

SERIOUS: TREE TRIMMING AND REMOVAL, GI PART 53, RULE 408.15331(3):

The climbing employee shall remain tied in until the work is completed and he has returned to the ground.

It was not ensured that an employee remained tied in with a climbing rope while working aloft in a tree. An employee sustained a fatal fall from approximately 40 feet on *date removed* when his climbing rope was cut and frayed approximately 8-12 inches from his climbing saddle. *Incident date removed by MIFACE.*