



Tree Contractor Operational Incident

On the 15th April 2024 during a safety audit a tier-two tree contracting team were found to be using chainsaws at height with no harnesses or rope access equipment.

The two-person team were working at opposite ends of the span, out of sight and earshot of each other, in close proximity to an 11kV overhead line.

One of the team was authorised with TUPS and should have been under the Personal Supervision of the team member authorised who held [AWP-13](#).

In addition, the team had failed to contact the Control Person to obtain permission to proceed with the work at their location in accordance with [SI-035 Vegetation Management](#)

The team were subsequently stood down and their authorisations suspended. The investigation is ongoing.



Example of aerial chainsaw work with the correct equipment (image courtesy of Proarb Ltd)

Recommendations and action points

- Ensure all members of the working party have the relevant authorisations and are competent for the work being carried out. All team members undertaking work on the System must have a copy of their authorisations available for inspection.
- Ensure all staff who are not authorised or hold training authorisations are adequately supervised.
Refer to [SI-2 Safety Rules Training, Authorisation and Competence](#) and [SI-3 Supervision of Non-Authorised Persons](#)
SPEN staff can also refer to [ARC – Trainee Supervision and Coaching](#)
- All work at height shall be adequately risk assessed and appropriate PPE shall be used.
- All tree work near to overhead lines and associated Plant shall be carried out in accordance with [SI-035 Vegetation Management](#)
- Risk assess and justify all work at height. Can aerial work be avoided by working from the ground using rods and cutting heads? Select the right tools for the job. The Arboricultural Association recommends adopting a hierarchy of tool use to reduce risks. Use hand tools before power tools when work at height cannot be avoided.