



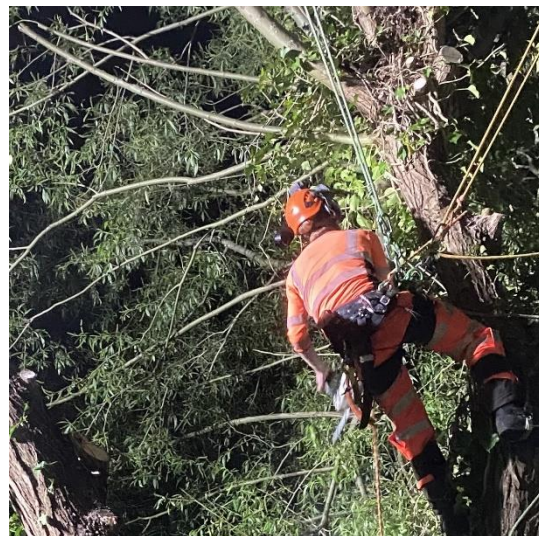
Tree Contractor Chainsaw Injury

On the 11th January 2024 an arborist carrying out power line clearances for Scottish Woodlands on behalf of SPEN sustained a serious injury to their arm when they came into contact with the moving chain of their chainsaw.

The arborist was in the process of removing branches using a top-handled chainsaw when they lost balance due to the unexpected movement of the stem they were cutting. The arborist's forearm came into contact with the chain of the saw.

The arborist was able to recover themselves to ground without assistance, where colleagues administered first aid and transported them to the nearest A&E. The wound was dressed and they attended clinic the following day to assess for nerve damage and subsequently underwent surgery to repair tendon damage.

The incident has been reported to the HSE by Scottish Woodlands under RIDDOR as the injured party was absent from work for more than seven days.



*Aerial chainsaw work
(image courtesy of Proarb Ltd)*

Recommendations and action points

- Adhere to the planned method of work indicated by the Utility Arboriculture Surveyor. If any changes are required, discuss and agree in advance of the works with the Surveyor and such changes must be recorded.
- Risk assess, apply the hierarchy of controls for both working at height and minimisation of powered tool risks and justify all work at height activities. Can the work be completed from the ground?
- Ensure all staff understand the importance of recognising the circumstances of when a shutdown is the safest option for undertaking the work.
- Plan the work and work to the plan. Use the SLAM technique to plan your work. Stop, Look, Assess, Manage. Ensure all members of the work party have been made aware of any hazards and agreed control measures.
- Ensure the correct tools have been selected for the job. The Arboricultural Association recommends the application of a hierarchy of tool use to lower risk. The preference is the use of hand tools before power tools when work at height cannot be avoided.
- Ensure step cutting of branches is carried out which allows the branch to fall away freely from the cutter, avoiding the saw being trapped in the cut and either jamming or being trapped by the branch and dragged down by the branch as it falls.