



Welcome to the second edition of *Arb News*, a newsletter to help keep you up to date with health and safety news.

Here are some sobering accident statistics relating to tree work:

- The odds of someone in forestry and arboriculture sustaining a major or fatal injury in any one year are estimated to be worse than 1 in 120.
- Last year (2003/04) five people were killed while undertaking tree work.
- Over a ten-year period, 49 people have been killed in incidents involving tree work and 12% of the deaths in agriculture are a result of tree-work activities. (Source: HSE's *Fatal injuries in farming, forestry and horticulture 2003/04*.)

Karabiner safety

HSE's research into the use of three-way karabiners has been published. The work was carried out by the Health and Safety Laboratory in Sheffield with help from the arboriculture industry. It has examined the way that karabiners are used, determined the most likely reasons for problems and suggested ways in which the design, maintenance and use of the karabiner could be improved to reduce the risk of the climber falling.

The findings will help prevent accidents and enable climbers to work with more confidence, if adopted by practitioners, trainers and manufacturers.

The researchers found:

- Karabiners need to be carefully maintained and lubricated, and replaced more often.
- Improvements are needed to the way karabiners are used – in particular the attachment of ropes and prusik loops.
- Manufacturers need to improve the design to ensure secure closing of the karabiner and to allow more effective maintenance.

Climbers should make sure they carefully do the following:

- Check the karabiner locking action before climbing.
- Check the gate has closed fully after each opening.
- Follow manufacturers' instructions for use and maintenance.
- Use recommended techniques for attaching ropes to the karabiner, as described in HSE leaflet AFAG401 *Tree-climbing operations*.
- Avoid circumstances where rope, strops, tree etc may exert force on the gate mechanism.
- Remove karabiners from service if they fail to close properly every time.
- Make sure karabiners are thoroughly examined every six months, as required by the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998 (LOLER).

The report, *Karabiner safety in the arboriculture industry*, is available free on HSE's website at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/research/hsl/engineer.htm>

Engaging arb contractors

HSE, with assistance from the Arboricultural Association, has held four highly successful events, each attended by about 80 people, for clients who use the services of arboricultural contractors. Clients have a crucial role to play in driving up health and safety standards in arboriculture, so the purpose of the events was to raise awareness of the importance of engaging a contractor with the necessary skills and resources to do the job safely and properly.

A wide range of companies and organisations took part, ranging from local authorities to construction developers to country estate managers. The events included details of health and safety responsibilities, demonstrations of good arboricultural work practices and stimulating discussions on contractor selection and supervision.

“Clients have a crucial role to play in driving up health and safety standards in arboriculture”

Recent HSE publications

Fatal injuries in farming, forestry and horticulture 2003/04

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture/pdf/fatal0304.pdf>

The health and safety starter pack: Health and safety advice and guidance for new and small businesses
ISBN 0 7176 2738 1
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/startup/content/starterpack.htm>

Climbing incidents

We welcome health and safety related information, alerts or news from you. Here Jack Kenyon from Merrist Wood College, Arboriculture Department gives details of lessons learnt from recent tree-climbing incidents:

'An investigation into two recent climbing accidents revealed a number of important issues. In particular, the failure to follow the same safety procedure which would have prevented the fall.

Case 1

The Yosemite tie off is made from the free end arising from the bowline attaching the climbing line to the harness. If the Yosemite tie off comes loose, it can be mistaken for the work loop of the bowline. The climber fell when changing anchor point in the tree and attaching his karabiner into the Yosemite tie off loop. There are better alternatives to the Yosemite tie off.

Case 2

The climber, on spikes and anchored around the stem, selected a suitable higher fork as an anchor point. The climber threw his rope, which passed over a dead peg under the fork. From the climber's position lower on the stem, the rope would have appeared to have gone over the fork. The dead peg detached with the climber's weight and he fell.

Both these incidents have shown that when changing from one anchor point to another in the tree, a climber must take the precaution of pre-loading the new anchor point before releasing from the last. This procedure does not compromise commercial practice. It should be established in training as a habitual routine.'

New Work at Height Regulations

New Regulations covering work at height will be coming into force in the New Year. The aim is to secure improvements in the way that work at height is managed and reduce the number of working people killed or injured from falls. The Regulations will not ban tree climbing, nor will they impose an absolute requirement to use work platforms. Instead they set out a framework for managing work at height emphasising that work should be properly assessed, work equipment is chosen carefully and is appropriate for the task, and is used in a safe and sensible way. The Regulations are now expected in early 2005.

Arboriculture fatal accident

The Director of a small tree work business died earlier this year, after suffering huge blood loss. He cut his left arm with a top-handled chainsaw. He was not roped to the tree, his employees were not able to rescue him and no first-aid equipment was available.

There must always be someone else able to rescue an injured climber. Climbers should always carry a large wound dressing. Top-handled chainsaws should always be used by properly trained people, and used with two hands.

Your views

What do you think of *Arb News*?
What would you like to see in future editions?

Send your views to Adrian Hodkinson at the address below.

To receive this newsletter by e-mail in future please send your e-mail address to:

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