

DROP ZONE POLICY

Struck-by object incidents are one of the four leading causes of serious and fatal injuries on the worksite. The purpose of this policy is to reduce the risk of injury from falling objects (tools/logs) when a trimmer is working aloft.

DEFINITION: A drop zone is defined as the area beneath a trimmer working aloft in arboricultural operations where a potential exists for injury from falling objects. The drop zone area is a subset of the work site area.

PERIMETER OF DROP ZONE: In many cases, the perimeters of a drop zone *will likely extend beyond the drip line of the tree.*

DROP ZONE REQUIREMENTS

- The drop zone will extend 360 degrees around the affected area;
- The drop zone shall be set at a distance beyond the drip edge (recommend 10 feet minimum) and far enough back to ensure tree parts do not fall outside the perimeters of the drop zone.
- The shape, size and distance of the perimeter from the tree(s) may not be circular and may not have equal distances across its boundaries due to geographic/site restrictions (i.e.. steep slopes, boulders, sheds, fences, garages, houses, etc.). In these cases, a particular boundary may be deemed off limits to any encroachment by all employees during the execution of the work plan.
 - *Example: If removing a 30-foot long limb growing upward, that will hinge over and then fall to the ground; the crew must take this factor into account --- this limb will obviously extend or break into pieces beyond the drop-zone boundary when it hits the ground.*
- Drop zone perimeters will be established using any of the following methods:
 - *Identifying fixed objects such as trees, bushes, yard structures, large rocks, utility poles, driveways, etc.*
 - *Safety cones, temporary marking flags, ribbon, etc.*

When the size and shape of a drop zone must be adjusted in response to a change in risk level, the crew shall implement the ALL STOP process. New perimeters will be defined, reviewed and communicated to all crew members.

DROP ZONE COMMUNICATION

- Verbal and visual communication protocol among workers aloft and ground personnel shall be established. Once a trimmer aloft gives a verbal warning that they are making cuts, workers below shall not enter the drop-zone until the trimmer gives a verbal and visual “all clear”.
- Workers entering the drop zone can exit and re- enter at any point until the trimmer aloft gives a command for ALL GROUND PERSONNEL to exit the drop zone and not re-enter.
- The trimmer aloft shall not resume work until all ground workers have exited the drop zone and the trimmer aloft receives an “all clear” response from every ground worker.
 - *Upon verification that all ground personnel have exited the drop zone, the ground personnel shall give verbal (“all clear”) and visual hand signal (hand signal above head, while maintaining visual contact with the trimmer) to proceed with trimming or removal process.*



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DROP ZONE REQUIREMENTS CONTINUED:

- Ground workers shall prevent property owners and other persons not directly involved in their job from entering the worksite prior to encroaching a drop zone. When any unapproved person(s) approaches an active worksite, all work shall stop until the person(s) are escorted from the immediate worksite.

DROP ZONE IMPLEMENTATION:

- The person-in-charge shall:
 - Establish a plan to safely manage the worksite, including defining the drop zone perimeter(s) and communication protocol.
 - Establish a drop zone for all trees requiring work and IDENTIFY the perimeter(s) to the crew.
 - Identify verbal and visual communication protocol among trimmers and ground personnel. Verbal communication by voice or radio shall employ a Command and Response (C&R). “Stand Clear” as the “Command” from aloft and “Clear” as the “Response” from the ground are examples.
 - Verify the trimmer aloft and ground personnel have a clear line-of-sight between each other before authorization to enter the drop zone is provided.
 - *Workers shall be equipped with whistles for hazard warning if needed.*

GUIDANCE / SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Rigging operations – Workers shall not stand in the line of fire or the drop zone during rigging operations. To avoid line of fire by moving limbs, ropes and working in the drop zone, use taglines and redirects to maneuver tree parts being lowered.

Blocking or Chunking Down a Spar or a Stem: The drop zone shall be at a minimum distance of OUTSIDE OF THE ORIGINAL DRIP LINE. If the original drip line is unknown, then the drop zone shall be 1.5 X (times) the height of the spar or stem.

Mechanical Trimmers (Skytrims / Jarraffs) – Mechanical trimmers pose unique risk of struck-by risk. Due to the mobile nature of their operations, drop zones are fluid and ever changing. To minimize the struck-by risk the following precautions shall be implemented:

- *Crew(s) shall be outfitted with walkie-talkies. The operator and the ground worker(s) shall maintain communication throughout the job.*
- *Due to the mobile nature of this machine, ground personnel will maintain a minimum of 300 feet clearance when directly in front and 100 feet on the side and rear of a working mechanical trimmer.*
- *The ground worker has the ability to stop a job if there is an infraction of the drop zone perimeter.*
- *All non-essential people shall maintain a 300 ft. minimum distance from any working machinery.*

Helicopter Trimming – follow policy outline in helicopter trimming operations.

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