



Tree lopping and gardening services: checklist

This checklist is a tool to assist duty holders and persons conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) including arborists, tree climbers, horticulturalists, gardeners, tree workers, landscapers, and others involved in the amenity (non-production) tree industry to manage their duties under work health and safety laws. It highlights relevant considerations for these tasks but does not cover all work health and safety requirements.

A work health and safety management system, including elements such as management commitment, safety planning, consultation, reporting, hazard management, training and supervision, is helpful to embed a systems-based approach to work health and safety but is not mandatory.

Guide to managing risks of tree trimming and removal work

Safe Work Australia published a [Guide to managing risks of tree trimming and removal work](#) providing practical information on how to manage risks associated with tree trimming and removal.

Checklist for tree lopping and gardening services

Work health and safety management	
	Workers are consulted about work health and safety matters
Hazard and injury reporting:	
	systems are in place for reporting hazards and injuries
	reported hazards and injuries are investigated
	systems are in place for reporting notifiable incidents to WorkSafe
In relation to all tasks:	
	hazards have been identified
	the risk of injury has been assessed where necessary
	control measures have been implemented so far as is reasonably practicable
	control measures are monitored to ensure effectiveness

	Safe operating procedures have been developed and implemented, and:
	emergency procedures are understood
	mobile or other means of communication is available
	Workers received adequate safety induction and task-specific training in relation to work health and safety
	Health and safety representatives elected as per <i>Work Health and Safety Act 2020</i> , if requested by a worker
	Health and safety representatives trained as per the legislation
	A health and safety committee is in place if requested
General safety	
	The crew have identified general and site-specific hazards and assessed associated risks
	<p>The most suitable method of accessing a tree has been identified (for example, EWP, tree climbing, use of other plant), considering the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tree condition, soundness and stability • tree crown, shape and weight distribution • nature of terrain • proximity to overhead powerlines • weather forecast • location of other workers and equipment.
	Workers are fit for duty
	Firefighting equipment is provided, tested and maintained
	<p>When trimming or conducting sectional felling:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an exclusion zone has been established for those not involved in work tasks • a drop zone is established and is fully contained within the exclusion zone, where parts of the tree or sections of the limbs and trunk may be felled or dropped • a spotter is present to ensure the exclusion and drop zone is maintained.
	<p>A rescue kit is available – depending on the type of emergency that may occur, this may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • climbing harness • carabiners (if used with climbing ropes or safety straps, must have at least three distinct actions to open) • lifeline • pole belt • prusik knots • climbing spikes • soft rope (synthetic, minimum breaking load 20kN) • first aid kit • micro pulleys • redirect slings • pocket knife with lanyard.
	All hardware for life support or rigging is load rated
Workers are trained in both the:	
	safe work procedures required in their role
	required emergency techniques (for example, aerial rescue)

Traffic management	
	Adequate traffic management control measures are in place to protect workers, motorists, cyclists and pedestrians
	A safe area or exclusion zone has been established to ensure people not involved in the tree work do not enter the area
	When roads and other public accessways fall within a two-tree length separation distance, road traffic and pedestrians must be prevented from entering the designated exclusion zone – temporary road closures, diversions or traffic control may be required
	<p>In areas of high public access (for example, near schools, shopping centres) additional controls should be used, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • barrier tape • barricades • additional workers • traffic management plan in place.
Elevating work platforms (EWPs)	
	<p>Correct EWP selected for the task, considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • compliance with AS/NZS 1418:10 Cranes, hoists and winches – Elevating work platforms • insulation requirements (electrical test certificate within 6 months) • ground conditions • height and reach • type of work to be done.
	Operator deemed competent to operate EWP and has current high risk work licence where required
	Appropriate harnesses are available and maintained
	<p>Other workers using the EWP have received training on relevant matters, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • harness use (where required) • emergency procedures • identifying hazards and risks associated with EWP use.
	Operator has carried out a documented pre-operational inspection of the EWP prior to starting
	The EWP logbook has been checked, and any recorded faults or safety issues have been assessed by a competent person before the EWP was put back in service
	Operator manual is available for the EWP
	The EWP basket is safely accessible
	When fitted stabilisers or outriggers are positioned, ground surface conditions are checked before raising the platform
	Planning, risk assessment or job safety analysis has been done to ensure the EWP is kept a safe distance from power lines, pedestrians or vehicle traffic
	A safety spotter (observer) is available and trained in the operation of the lower vehicle mounted controls (to lower the platform in an emergency)
	Operators keep both feet flat on the floor of the basket
	Operation of the EWP is in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions
Self-propelled EWPs are not driven:	
	with the basket elevated (unless set in low speed)
	over gutters, curbs, or sloping driveways.
	The EWP is not used to lower objects

Tree climbing	
	Before climbing, the tree is inspected by a competent person to determine suitability, precautions or special techniques required
	If there is a need to climb into a tree; the climber is wearing a harness suitable for tree climbing, and is attached to the tree on a tested anchor point before releasing the anchor in the EWP basket
	Minimum of two persons are present; one climber and one ground person who can climb and is trained in aerial rescue
	Regular visual and/or verbal communication is maintained between the climber and the ground person
	Climbing rope is only passed around sound and suitably strong anchor points
	Climber always has access to the climbing rope
	Climbing rope is kept taut
	All points of attachment are correctly set and visually inspected before placing weight on them
	All climbing equipment is checked daily (prior to first use and periodically throughout the day)
Wood chippers	
	An adequate number of emergency stops are installed and regularly checked to ensure they are working
	Hot parts and nip points are adequately guarded
	Operators are trained and competent to use a wood chipper
	The operator is situated to the side of infeed chute and tree waste is fed into the chute butt end first
	Operator does not wear loose clothing, jewellery, rings or a watch
	Operator does not work alone
Chainsaws	
	Operator is trained and competent to use a chainsaw
	Chainsaw is sharpened and tensioned in accordance with manufacturer's requirements
	Sharpening, refueling or maintenance is conducted out of the tree
	Do not use chainsaw to cut anything above shoulder height and two hands are used to operate the chainsaw
	Start the chainsaw close to the working position, ensuring the chain is clear of the operator
	Bystanders, other persons and animals are kept away when starting and using the chainsaw
Chainsaw is checked before use to verify the:	
	bar, chain and sprockets are in good condition
	bar oil is flowing
	chain brake is working
	chain is sharp

Use of other powered mobile plant	
Only use powered mobile plant, such as excavators or bulldozers, to push trees if they:	
	have the capacity, height and reach to push the tree safely
	are fitted with an operator protective structure
	can safely control the fall direction of the tree
Stump grinders	
	Underground services have been identified
	An exclusion zone has been set up
	Loose rocks, pipes, or debris have been identified and moved
	Guards and debris curtains are in place
	The cutting wheel is sharp
	Emergency stop is working
	Pre-start check is completed
Hazardous chemicals	
	Safety data sheets (SDS) are readily available and are not more than 5 years old
	A hazardous chemicals register is readily available
	Chemicals are correctly labelled (including chemicals decanted from manufacturers' containers)
	No ignition sources are introduced into a hazardous area
	Workers using hazardous chemicals are competent and have received adequate training, information and instruction
Personal protective equipment (PPE)	
	PPE is maintained and is in good working order
	Workers instructed in the safe use and maintenance of PPE
PPE is provided where necessary and may include:	
	eye protection
	hearing protection
	safety helmets
	safety harness
	safety boots
	gloves
	high visibility vest
	leg protection (cut resistant trousers or chaps as preferred)
	sunscreen and sun-protective clothing

Electricity and overhead powerlines

	Prior to commencing vegetation management work near live overhead power lines, hazard identification and risk assessment have been carried out and adequate control measures have been determined – refer to Building and Energy's <i>Electrical safety for vegetation workers</i>
	The voltage and type of power line have been identified – where this is not possible, further information is obtained from the network operator
	People, plant and things do not enter the danger zone of an overhead powerline
	Adequate systems for vegetation control work in the vicinity of overhead powerlines are in place, including systems to ensure that no person, plant or equipment gets too close to overhead powerlines by using a safety observer (spotter) on the ground – the spotter has received training on working in the vicinity of overhead powerlines
	The chassis of the EWP is connected to earth by a rated electrical cable and metal earthing spike, which should be driven 600mm into the ground, where practical
	Electrical equipment supplied with electricity through an electrical socket has been tested by a competent person
	Ladders with insulated properties are provided for working near live overhead power lines
	Workers undertaking vegetation management have completed competency-based training
	Metal objects, such as hanging jewellery, are removed before commencing work and long hair and beards have been secured
	Workers are trained on the safe work procedure and this is available to workers for the duration of the work
Insulated tools and equipment are:	
	readily available for use in work near overhead powerlines
	designed and approved specifically for work near overhead powerlines
	regularly tested by a competent person

Notes