

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH INSPECTION SERVICE

JOB HAZARD ASSESSMENT

JOB DESCRIPTION:

Tree Climbing Activities

JHA NUMBER:

JHA WS-23.0

JOB LOCATION:

WS-Wide

DEPARTMENT NAME:

WS Safety and Health Program

PREPARED BY:

Steve Greiner, WS Safety and Health Manager

DATE:

11/13/2023

SIGNATURE

SEQUENCE OF BASIC JOB STEPS	POTENTIAL ACCIDENTS OR HAZARDS	CONTROL/MITIGATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work sites or activities in which tree climbing is involved for WS related activities.</li> <li>• Work sites or activities which might include bird nest inspection and/or removal, and other WS-related activities.</li> <li>• Use of ropes, ladders, and other equipment or devices to get oneself on, into, up, or down a tree.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Injuries associated with climbing, descending, entanglement, falling objects, or falls from a height. Such as cuts, blisters, lacerations, contusions, broken bones, and other related trauma to the head, neck, spine, bones, internal organs, muscles, skin, and other body parts. Either from contact with the tree trunk, limbs, climbing equipment</li> <li>• <b>Physical Materials:</b> Ropes, climbing equipment, boot spikes, saws, broken branches, thorns, etc. Ultraviolet radiation (sunburns)</li> <li>• <b>Biological:</b> Wasps, hornets, bees, ticks, chiggers, birds, racoons, opossum, bats, squirrels, and other tree dwelling insects or animals which may bite, scratch, cut, sting, or attack if provoked or while defending their young. Plants such as fungi, molds, ivy, poison ivy, poison sumac, poison oak, stinging nettle, giant hogweed, thorny plants, etc. which may contain or exude toxins, irritants, or impale by means of thorns or needles. Illness from zoonotic diseases, bacteria, or biotoxins.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be aware of such potential hazards and materials, and wear or use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), clothing, devices, and equipment comprised of appropriate types of materials and construction needed to protect from punctures, cuts, scratches, blisters, musculoskeletal, and other injuries related to a ascending, descending, falling objects, fall from heights, or physical and biological hazards.</li> <li>• All WS employees who will be required to climb trees in the performance of official duties must be trained in advance according to the WS Tree Climbing Safety SOP.</li> <li>• Immediately report all injuries, incidents, accidents, and hazardous working conditions to your supervisor.</li> <li>• Supervisors, submit an APHIS Online First Report for all reportable injuries and accidents.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General hazards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Injuries to the fingers, hands, arms, feet, legs, head, skin, body, eyes, ears, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wear/use appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) including such items as: safety glasses, climbing footwear (e.g. approach style climbing boot should provide ankle support but allow flexibility, traction/grip/tread for gripping climbing line and tree parts with base of foot, heel, and toes, and arch support that permits flexibility), logger boot (logger boot should have raised heel to secure climbing spurs and composite toe and shank to comply with ANSI Z133 standards for working in proximity to electrical hazards), helmet (standard and E rated), face shields, hearing protection (when applicable), chainsaw chaps/trousers, appropriate hearing protection, head and face protection, Hi-vis clothing, insect repellents, sun screen/sun block, and other items, devices, and materials to protect against injuries.</li> <li><b>Note:</b> each employees' specific needs may be different when selecting proper PPE for feet and hands. Ensure that all PPE used (footwear and gloves) can grip the climbing line and tree parts to avoid slippage.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Walking surfaces</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Injuries from slips, trips, and falls</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be aware of terrain and impact of weather conditions. Watch for tripping hazards such as logs, branches, vines, thick vegetations, rocks, and other obstacles. Use extra caution walking on slopes, wet vegetation, muddy areas, and other slippery surfaces. Wear proper footwear and balance your pack. Slow down when necessary.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Temperature extremes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Injuries from extreme cold or heat</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cold: Dress in layers. Take frequent breaks to warm up. Stay hydrated and beware of signs of hypothermia. Use disposable hand warmers.</li> <li>Heat: If possible, wear loose-fitting, light-colored clothing. Stay hydrated and watch for signs of heat exhaustion. Take sufficient breaks. Stay in the shade as much as possible.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encounters with dangerous Insects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Insects which may bite, sting, imbed, and cause injury, pain, possible allergic reaction, or cause an infection or disease.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bees/wasps/hornets: Be prepared for quick descent if encountered during climb. If possible, avoid tree or reschedule for winter. Be aware of allergies among co-workers. Carry EpiPens if known to be allergic to insect stings. Watch for bee/wasp/hornet hives and nests while climbing.</li> <li>Ticks/chiggers: If possible, wear light colored clothes and tuck in your clothing before going to the field. Check yourself regularly. Be aware of signs of tick-borne diseases such as the "bulls eye" with Lyme disease. Use DEET or other skin-applied repellents, and wear repellent (e.g., permethrin) treated clothing if available.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encounters with dangerous animals/wildlife</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raptors, birds, mammals, reptiles which may inhabit or exist in, on, or around trees, and may attack, bite, claw, scratch, or cause other injuries.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Look for potential presence during tree hazard assessment such as feces, owl pellets, feathers, claw marks, or other clues to the possible presence of owls, raccoons, opossum, or other tree-dwelling animals. If identified, reschedule, or avoid completely. Watch hand placement for hidden nesting holes, snakes on branches, or hidden animals.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encounters with dangerous plants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plants such as poison ivy, poison oak, poison sumac, stinging nettle, and other plants which can cause irritation, pain, blisters, and other injuries upon contact.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Know how to recognize various dangerous plants and avoid contact if possible. Utilize pre and post-contact lotions and washes. Wear long sleeves when possible.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Energized wires</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Electrical arcs and shock</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be aware of possible energized electrical wires or lines, such as overhead power lines or electrified fences. Treat all overhead lines as if energized. Do not allow body parts or equipment to come within 20 feet of any overhead power line.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Equipment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Defective Equipment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Life supporting equipment must be inspected with each use. Retire and replace defective life supporting equipment immediately.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hand Tools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Injuries from the use of hand tools (handsaws, drills, screwdrivers, knives)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Always cut away from body. Make sure knife is maintained and use with care. Always be tied in twice while cutting. Utilize independent lanyard or webbing sling to secure drill while aloft. Never ascend or descend with bit in drill.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ergonomics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Muscle aches, sprains, spasms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pre-climb stretches and stay hydrated. Seek medical attention if appropriate. Report issues to lead or supervisor as soon as possible.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pre-work safety/hazard review</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safety checks and review of potential hazards</li> </ul>	<p>The pre-work safety/hazard review shall include the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish a check-out and check-in procedure.</li> <li>2. Analyze the assignment, and then obtain the equipment needed.</li> <li>3. Inspect the equipment.</li> <li>4. Ensure communication is established either by radio or cell phone at the climbing site. If direct contact is not possible from the climbing site, an alternative method for summoning emergency help shall be established before climbing.</li> <li>5. Assess the environment for potential hazards.</li> <li>6. Assess the tree and immediate area for potential hazards.</li> </ol>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Post-work safety follow-up</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>After-action checks and review</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow-up with those involved to ensure all personnel and equipment are safe and accounted for. Note any adverse incidents which occurred during the action along with improvements or remediations which might need to be made or addressed for future actions.</li> </ul>