

N E W S R E L E A S E

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Cal/OSHA Investigates Four Recent Tree Trimming Deaths, Announces Safety Campaign

Oakland—Following four recent tree-trimming workplace fatalities, Cal/OSHA is reminding workers and employers in this high-risk industry to take precautions to avoid accidents.

Cal/OSHA is investigating the four deaths, which occurred over the last six weeks, and has launched a statewide safety awareness campaign for tree service companies, landscapers and other businesses.

The four tree-trimming deaths under investigation include:

- a worker in Mariposa County who was struck by a branch on December 1
- a worker in San Bernardino County who suffocated when dry palm fronds collapsed and trapped him on December 4
- a worker in Los Angeles County who fell approximately 60 feet when the branch he was tethered to broke on January 6
- a worker in Siskiyou County who was struck by the tree he was cutting to clear power lines on January 9

“Cal/OSHA’s safety awareness campaign aims to protect the lives of tree service workers,” said Cal/OSHA Chief Juliann Sum. “Employers in this high-risk industry need to be aware of, and take steps to minimize, the hazards to their workers. We will cite employers that are not in compliance with safety requirements.”

Cal/OSHA investigated nearly 70 accidents involving tree work, including trimming or removal services, in the two-year period between October 1, 2014 and September 30, 2016. Nearly three out of four of these accidents (74%) resulted in a worker hospitalization, and 12 of the accidents involved the death of a worker.

As part of the Tree Work Safety Emphasis Program, Cal/OSHA inspectors throughout the state who observe unsafe tree trimming or tree removal operations will investigate possible violations. Inspectors will also respond to reports of unsafe operations.

The major causes of tree trimming injuries and fatalities include falls, electrical shock, being struck by a tree branch, chainsaw lacerations, palm tree skirt collapses and ladder accidents. For example, on December 30, 2015, a Wright Tree Service worker in Humboldt County accidentally cut the lanyard used to secure himself to a tree and fell 54 feet to his death. The [investigation](#) revealed the employer failed to ensure the worker was using a required second point of attachment in his security system while he was operating a chain saw in a tree.

Cal/OSHA has resources available to help employees and employers prevent accidents like these, including a [Tree Work Safety Guide](#), [fact sheet](#) and [checklist](#).

Cal/OSHA helps protect workers from health and safety hazards on the job in almost every workplace in California. [Cal/OSHA's Consultation Services Branch](#) provides free and voluntary assistance to employers to improve their health and safety programs. Employers should call (800) 963-9424 for assistance from Cal/OSHA Consultation Services.

Employees with work-related questions or complaints may contact DIR's Call Center in English or Spanish at 844-LABOR-DIR (844-522-6734). The California Workers' Information line at 866-924-9757 provides recorded information in English and Spanish on a variety of work-related topics. Complaints can also be filed confidentially with [Cal/OSHA district offices](#).

Members of the press may contact Erika Monterroza or Peter Melton at (510) 286-1161, and are encouraged to [subscribe to get email alerts](#) on DIR's press releases or other departmental updates.

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