

Tree and Shrub Trimming / Maintenance

This Alert is intended to inform workers engaged in outdoor tasks related to tree trimming and shrub maintenance, often in geographical remote areas, of the workplace hazards associated with physically demanding tasks that often require mechanical equipment assistance to complete in a safe and timely manner.

WorkSafe Victoria has recently released details of serious incidents that have involved workers undertaking tree trimming and resulted in serious injuries from interaction with fauna such as snakes, bees, wasps, etc.:

- A worker was clearing trees under power lines and fell from an elevated work platform when he was attacked by a swarm of bees. He sustained a broken leg and ankle.
- An arborist was working 15 meters up a tree when he was attacked by a swarm of bees. He had an allergic reaction to the bee stings which was exacerbated by the time it took to safely rescue him from the tree to receive medical assistance.

Observed Hazards

- Slips, trips and falls;
- Being cut by hand held tools;
- Being struck by falling branches;
- Electrocutation if contact is made with overhead power lines;
- Noise from the use of tools such as chain saws, brush cutters, whippersnappers, etc;
- Fauna attack such as snakes, bees, wasps, etc;
- Interaction with mobile plant and machinery; and
- Working remotely / in isolation limiting speedy access in the event of an emergency to medical facilities.

Implemented Risk Control Measures

- Introduce higher order risk controls such as Australian Standard compliant elevated work platforms (EWPs), ladders, harnesses and lanyards;
- Using chainsaws fitted with 'anti kick back' and protection from broken chains;
- Ensure appropriate personal protective equipment and clothing (PPE/C) is worn and structural integrity is maintained;
- Training including provisions for correct first aid treatment (including severe allergic reactions to bites), emergency and communication protocols, safety signage requirements, etc;
- Cease the activity and seek expert advice if fauna encountered within outdoor work area and seek shelter in your vehicle or nearby structure if practicable; and

Safety Alert

June 2016



- Well established, accessible and understood SOPs and current, tailored and signed SWMS on all high risk outdoor work tasks including tree felling and shrub maintenance.

Safety Alert Number No. 134 issued June 2016 by VicRoads Corporate OHS Team.