3D Safety talks

FROM THE ISAO SAFETY COMMITTEE: LADDER SAFETY FOR ARBORISTS

Introduction

- Arborists frequently use ladders to access trees for pruning, inspection, and maintenance activities.
- Working at heights presents significant risks, particularly when ladders are used on uneven ground or in adverse weather conditions.
- Falls from ladders remain one of the leading causes of workplace injuries in the arboriculture industry.
- Understanding ladder hazards and applying effective control measures can help reduce the likelihood of incidents and improve workplace safety.
- Arborists must be trained in safe ladder selection, setup, use, and inspection procedures before working at heights.

DESCRIBE the Hazards

- Falls from ladders can occur due to unstable ground conditions, overreaching, loss of balance, or ladder failure.
- Arborists often work on sloped, soft, wet, or uneven terrain, which can compromise ladder stability.
- Be aware of electrical hazards that might be hidden by branches & vegetation.
- High winds, rain, ice, and poor visibility increase the likelihood of slips and falls.
- Carrying tools while climbing can reduce three-point contact and increase the risk of losing balance.
- Damaged ladder components such as cracked rails, bent rungs, or defective locking mechanisms may cause structural failure.
- Tree branches and vegetation can obstruct ladder placement and create unexpected movement during work activities.
- Fatigue and inadequate training can contribute to poor judgment and unsafe ladder practices.

DISCUSS Control Measures

- Assess risks before starting work to identify site-specific hazards. Are no other work methods available, other than working from a ladder? (E.g. working from the ground, or scaffolding, or a MEWP).
- Select the correct ladder type, length, and load rating for the task being performed.
- Inspect ladders before each use and remove damaged equipment from service immediately.
- Position ladders on firm, level ground and use stabilizing devices where necessary.
- Maintain a 4:1 angle when setting up extension ladders. For every 4ft vertical height the ladder must be placed 1ft away from the tree or object.
- Secure ladders at the top and bottom whenever possible to prevent movement.
- Keep three points of control while ascending, descending, and working from a ladder.
- Avoid overreaching by descending and repositioning the ladder as required.
- Use non-conductive ladders when working near electrical hazards. Remember the electrical limits of approach - your safe distances are:

  o 750 volts to 150,000 volts: 3 metres
  o 150,001 volts to 250,000 volts: 4.5 metres
  o More than 250,000 volts: 6 metres

- Store and transport ladders correctly to prevent damage and deterioration.
- Follow manufacturer instructions and workplace safety procedures at all times.

DEMONSTRATE Knowledge

- Maintain three-point control and avoid unsafe climbing practices.
- Identify environmental conditions that may affect ladder stability and worker safety.
- Demonstrate the ability to select, inspect, position, and secure a ladder correctly.
- Apply workplace policies, safe work procedures, and relevant occupational health and safety requirements.
- Report damaged equipment, unsafe conditions, and incidents promptly to supervisors.
- Participate in training and refresher programs to maintain competency in ladder safety practices. WSPS currently has a FREE 1 hour online Ladder Safety Training Course https://shop.wsps.ca/products/ladder-safety-for-ontario-workers-ecourse

Date: _____

Location: _____

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Presenter: _____

MEETING WAS ATTENDED BY
(Each participant is to sign below)

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ISA ONTARIO