



Risk assessment and method statement

Tree surgery RAMS

Tree pruning, dismantling and felling. Pre-filled with typical hazards, controls and sequence: edit it for this site.

PROJECT

SITE ADDRESS			
ACTIVITY		RAMS REFERENCE	
Tree pruning, dismantling and felling			
CONTRACTOR CARRYING OUT THE WORK		PRINCIPAL CONTRACTOR	
PREPARED BY	APPROVED BY	REVISION	DATE

Revision record

Reissue and rebrief when the sequence, the programme, the team or the conditions change. If you would have written it differently had you known, it needs a new revision.

REV	DATE	WHAT CHANGED	BY

THE WORK

The activity, the place and the people

Pre-filled for this kind of work. Make every line specific to this site: this sequence, this access, these people, this weather.

Scope of the activity

What is being done, and what is not included.

MHSWR REGULATION 3(1)

Work to [number and species of trees] at [location] as shown on [plan or schedule ref]: [crown reduction / dismantling / felling / stump grinding]. Method: [climbing / MEWP / ground felling]. Arisings [chipped and removed / left on site]. Not included: [list any exclusions].

Location and access

Where on site, how people and materials get there, and the restrictions.

Site access via [gate or road]. Chipper and vehicles parked at [area], outside the drop zone. Drop zone and felling danger zone barriered, with signs on every approach. Public path or road on [side] closed or controlled by [banksman / traffic management]. Working hours [08:00 to 17:00].

Programme and interfaces

When the work runs, and who else is working nearby.

CDM REGULATION 15(2)

START DATE

DURATION

WORKING HOURS

INTERFACES WITH OTHER TRADES

Client and occupiers: [names], told of the exclusion zones and timings. Network operator for lines near the work: [name and reference]. Highway authority for any road works: [reference]. Other trades on site kept outside the zones.

Documents this RAMS relies on

Tree survey or schedule of work [ref]. Tree preservation order consent or conservation area notice [ref]. Network operator advice [ref]. LOLER examination reports for climbing, rigging and MEWP. Traffic management plan [ref]. Aerial rescue plan.

The team, and their competence

CDM REGULATION 8

ROLE	NAME	CARD, TICKET OR TRAINING NEEDED	CONTACT
Climbers		Certificates of competence for tree climbing, aerial rescue and chainsaw use from a rope and harness.	
Chainsaw operators		Certificate of competence for the work, from an awarding body such as City and Guilds NPTC or Lantra.	
Aerial rescuer		Trained and equipped to rescue the climber without delay, on site whenever anyone is climbing.	
Chipper operator		Trained in the machine, its protection devices and safe feeding.	
MEWP operator		Trained on the platform and in using a chainsaw from it.	
Team leader		Experienced in the work, plans the job with the climber and controls the site.	

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METHOD STATEMENT

The sequence of work

The order the team will work in on the day, with the controls built into each stage. If the sequence changes on site, revise the RAMS and brief it again.

STAGE	WHAT IS DONE, AND HOW	CONTROLS AT THIS STAGE	BY
Before the day	Survey the tree and site: condition, access, overhead lines, services, the public and any road. Check tree preservation orders, conservation area status and nesting birds. Book plant and any traffic management.	Network operator consulted within 10 metres of lines; TPO consent or conservation area notice in place; RAMS agreed with the client or principal contractor.	Contracts manager
Arrival and briefing	Sign in, then brief the team on this RAMS, the work plan, the drop zone, the signals between climber and ground, and the aerial rescue plan. Name the rescuer.	Briefing signed against this revision; certificates of competence checked; at least two people for aerial work.	Team leader
Set up the work zone	Put signs on every approach, barrier the drop zone and felling danger zone, and place banksmen where the public could walk in. Set the chipper level and out of the drop zone.	Traffic management in place before work on or beside a road; emergency access kept clear.	Team leader
Inspect the tree	Inspect the tree from the ground for decay, cavities, deadwood, hung branches and wildlife, and agree the anchor points and the order of cuts.	Unsafe tree means a MEWP or another method; nesting birds mean work is changed or delayed.	Climber
Pre-climb checks	Check harness, ropes, karabiners, friction devices, lanyards and saws. Lay out the rescue kit at the base of the tree.	LOLER examination reports in date; damaged kit taken out of use; rescuer kitted and ready.	Climber
Climb and set anchors	Install the climbing system and climb to the work position, setting the anchor and the secondary attachment.	Two load-bearing anchor points where feasible; backup system in place before work starts.	Climber
Prune or dismantle	Carry out the pruning, reduction or dismantling to the specification, cutting from a stable work position.	Top-handled saw on a lanyard, both hands wherever possible; nobody in the drop zone until the climber confirms it.	Climber
Rig and lower sections	Where sections cannot be dropped, rig and lower them on ropes, blocks and a lowering device, with the ground team controlling the load.	Rigging planned and within rated loads; kit thoroughly examined; ground team clear of the landing area.	Team leader
Fell and grind	Where in scope, fell the remaining stem with directional cuts, then grind the stump.	Danger zone of twice the tree height clear; escape routes open; services checked before grinding.	Feller
Chip, clear and hand over	Chip the brash, cut and stack or remove the timber, clear the site and remove signs and barriers once everything is safe.	Chipper fed butt first, rollers stopped before reaching in; site walked with the client before leaving.	Team leader

CDM REGULATION 15(2): PLAN, MANAGE AND MONITOR THE WORK

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RISK ASSESSMENT

Hazards, controls and the risk that remains

Each significant hazard rated before and after its controls, as likelihood times severity. The ratings are typical: check them for this site.

	LIKELIHOOD		SEVERITY		
	1	2	3	4	5
5	5	10	15	20	25
4	4	8	12	16	20
3	3	6	9	12	15
2	2	4	6	8	10
1	1	2	3	4	5
	1	2	3	4	5

1 to 4 low
 5 to 12 medium
 15 to 25 high

HAZARD	WHO COULD BE HARMED, AND HOW	RISK BEFORE	CONTROLS	RISK AFTER	BY
Falls while climbing and working in the tree	Climbers ascending, moving through the crown and working from a rope and harness.	4 x 5 = 20 High	- Climbing system attached to two load-bearing anchor points where feasible, with a backup to stop or arrest a fall, as the HSE tree climbing guidance sets out. - Climber trained and certificated for tree climbing and for the techniques in use. - For rope access such as single rope technique, one rope only where the risk assessment shows a second line would be more dangerous.	1 x 5 = 5 Med	Climber
Anchor or tree failure	Climbers relying on a weak, decayed or dead anchor, and ground staff below.	3 x 5 = 15 High	- Tree inspected from the ground before climbing for decay, cavities, deadwood, cracks and hung branches. - Anchor chosen in sound wood with enough strength for the climber and any rigging load; tested before committing weight. - MEWP or another method used where the tree is not safe to climb.	1 x 5 = 5 Med	
Climber injured or stuck in the tree	A climber cut, struck, taken ill or unable to descend.	3 x 5 = 15 High	- At least two people on site for aerial work; one of the ground team competent and equipped to do an aerial rescue without delay. - Rescue kit at the base of the tree and the rescue plan briefed before the climb. - Rescue practised, and the emergency services meeting point agreed.	2 x 5 = 10 Med	Team leader
Chainsaw cuts while working aloft	Climbers using a saw from a rope and harness.	3 x 5 = 15 High	- Top-handled saws used only off the ground, and only by trained, competent arborists. - Saw on a lanyard, both hands on the saw wherever possible, and the chain brake on before restarting in the tree. - Saw kept clear of the body and climbing kit, from the best cutting position; no holding and cutting a section.	1 x 5 = 5 Med	
Chainsaw cuts and kickback on the ground	Chainsaw operators crosscutting, snedding and felling, and people nearby.	4 x 5 = 20 High	- Operators trained and holding the certificate of competence for the work, or trainees under supervision. - Daily checks of chain brake, chain catcher, throttle lockout and stop switch; low-kickback chain. - Saw kept below chest height, the nose kept clear of obstructions, chain brake applied when not cutting. - Chainsaw trousers, boots, gloves, helmet, visor and hearing protection worn.	2 x 5 = 10 Med	
Struck by a falling tree when felling	The feller, ground staff and anyone within twice the height of the tree.	3 x 5 = 15 High	- Tree checked for rot, lean, uneven crown, broken branches and wind before the cut is planned. - Danger zone of twice the tree height kept clear; escape routes cleared before cutting. - Wedges, breaking bar or winch on hand; hung-up trees brought down only by people trained to do it.	1 x 5 = 5 Med	Feller
Rigging and lowering failures	Climbers and ground staff when sections are lowered on ropes, blocks and lowering devices.	3 x 5 = 15 High	- Each rigging operation planned by a competent person, supervised, and kept within the rated load of every component. - Rigging kit thoroughly examined under LOLER and checked before use. - Ground staff out of the drop zone until the section is down and the climber says so.	1 x 5 = 5 Med	
Falling branches, timber and tools	Ground staff, the public and property below the work.	4 x 4 = 16 High	- Drop zone barriered and kept clear, with signals between climber and ground agreed before work. - Nobody enters the drop zone until the climber stops and confirms it. - Helmets worn on the ground; tools and saws secured aloft.	2 x 4 = 8 Med	

MHSWR REGULATION 3(6): WITH FIVE OR MORE EMPLOYEES, RECORD THE SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS

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RISK ASSESSMENT, CONTINUED

More hazards, and those specific to this site

HAZARD	WHO COULD BE HARMED, AND HOW	RISK BEFORE	CONTROLS	RISK AFTER	BY
Climbing equipment failure	Climbers relying on ropes, harnesses, karabiners and friction devices.	2 x 5 = 10 Med	- Kit for lifting people thoroughly examined at least every 6 months under LOLER, with the reports kept. - Daily pre-use check by the user, and a written weekly inspection record for ropes and high wear items. - Damaged, contaminated or chainsaw-nicked kit taken out of use at once.	1 x 5 = 5 Med	
Overhead power lines	Climbers, MEWP operators and ground staff working near or felling towards lines.	2 x 5 = 10 Med	- Work within 10 metres of an overhead line planned with the network operator before starting, as HSE advises. - For felling, line owners contacted where the line is within twice the height of the tree. - Work goes ahead only to the procedure the network operator sets, which may mean the line is made dead.	1 x 5 = 5 Med	
Wood chipper: drawn into the infeed	Operators feeding brash, and anyone helping at the chute.	3 x 5 = 15 High	- Operator trained in feeding the chipper; machine set level so the chute height suits the protection device. - Close-fitting clothing, gloves with tucked-in cuffs, branches fed butt first and released once gripped. - Short material pushed in with a long branch; rollers stopped before anyone reaches into the chute.	1 x 5 = 5 Med	
Stump grinders	Operators and people nearby, from flying debris and contact with the cutting wheel.	3 x 4 = 12 Med	- Operated only by someone trained on the machine, with guards in place and the area cleared. - Services checked before grinding below ground; others kept back from the debris zone.	1 x 4 = 4 Low	
Working from a MEWP	Operators in the basket and people below the boom.	3 x 5 = 15 High	- Operator trained on the platform and in using a chainsaw from it. - Platform set up on firm ground with outriggers or stabilisers deployed; harness and short lanyard worn in boom-type platforms. - Cut sections kept clear of the boom and basket.	1 x 5 = 5 Med	
The public and road users	Passers-by, residents, drivers and anyone using a path or road near the work.	3 x 5 = 15 High	- Warning and prohibition signs on every foreseeable approach, with barriers in busy areas. - Banksman at access points to stop or redirect the public, in contact with the operators. - Work beside a road set out with the highway authority's permission and trained traffic management.	1 x 5 = 5 Med	
Noise and vibration from saws and chippers	Chainsaw operators, chipper operators and ground staff working nearby.	4 x 3 = 12 Med	- Low-noise and low-vibration saws with anti-vibration mounts, maintained to the manufacturer's schedule. - Hearing protection worn; trigger time planned against the hand-arm vibration exposure action value. - Health surveillance where exposure cannot be reduced; tingling or numbness reported at once.	2 x 3 = 6 Med	
Manual handling of timber	Ground staff moving logs, rounds and brash.	4 x 3 = 12 Med	- Timber cut into manageable pieces, then rolled, pivoted or slid rather than lifted. - Aid tools such as log tongs, pulp hooks, cant hooks and winches provided and used; help for larger sections.	2 x 3 = 6 Med	
Fuel and fire	Operators refuelling saws and chippers, and anyone near the fuel.	2 x 4 = 8 Med	- Fuel in labelled containers with secure caps and an auto-filler spout, spills wiped up. - Fuel kept away from ignition sources, including the saw itself, at least 4 metres during starting and use as HSE recommends. - No discarded engine oil used as chain lubricant.	1 x 4 = 4 Low	
Severe bleeding and remote sites	Anyone cut by a saw, especially where help is far away or someone works alone.	3 x 5 = 15 High	- Each operator carries a personal first aid kit with haemostatic dressings and a tourniquet, as HSE tree work guidance sets out. - Nobody works alone with a chainsaw where it can be avoided; otherwise regular contact and a check-in time. - Site location, grid reference and access point for the emergency services known before work starts.	2 x 5 = 10 Med	

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EQUIPMENT

Plant, equipment and PPE

Plant and equipment

Each item, the checks and certificates it needs, and who may operate it.

PUWER 1998, LOLER 1998

ITEM	CHECKS AND CERTIFICATES	OPERATOR COMPETENCE
Chainsaws, rear and top-handled	Daily check of chain brake, catcher, lockout and stop switch.	Certificate of competence
Ropes, harnesses, karabiners	Pre-use check daily; weekly written record; LOLER exam 6-monthly.	Each climber
Rigging kit and lowering device	Pre-use check; rated loads known; LOLER exam in date.	Trained in rigging
Wood chipper	Protection device tested before use; machine level; knives sharp.	Trained operator
Stump grinder	Guards in place; cutting teeth checked; area cleared.	Trained operator
MEWP	Pre-use check; LOLER exam in date; ground checked for outriggers.	Trained operator

Personal protective equipment

PPE is the last line of defence, after the controls above. Specify the type, not just the item.

PPE AT WORK REGULATIONS 1992

ITEM	NEEDED	TYPE AND SPECIFICATION
Safety helmet	☒	With visor and ear defenders
Safety footwear	☒	Chainsaw boots, with chainsaw trousers
High-visibility clothing	☒	Ground staff near roads and public
Gloves	☒	To the saw and task; chainsaw gloves
Eye protection	☒	Mesh visor or glasses
Hearing protection	☒	Saws, chipper and stump grinder
Respiratory protection Type, and face-fit tested	☐	
Harness or restraint Anchor points identified	☒	Climbing harness; MEWP harness

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CONTROLS

Substances, permits, emergencies and the environment

Hazardous substances

Each substance and its COSHH assessment.

COSHH 2002, REGULATION 6

SUBSTANCE	COSHH ASSESSMENT REFERENCE	CONTROLS
Petrol and two-stroke fuel	[ref]	Labelled containers; auto-filler spout; kept away from ignition sources.
Chain oil	[ref]	Proper chain oil only, never used engine oil; gloves; wash skin.
Wood dust from chipping and grinding	[ref]	Work upwind of the chipper and grinder; RPE where dust is heavy.

Permits and plans

PERMIT OR PLAN	NEEDED	REFERENCE
Hot work permit	☐	
Permit to work	☒	
Permit to dig or break ground	☐	
Confined space entry	☐	
Lift plan	☒	
Temporary works design	☐	

Emergency and rescue

First aid, fire, and how someone is rescued.
The rescue plan belongs in the RAMS, not after it.

Aerial rescue plan with a named rescuer and kit at the base of the tree. Personal first aid kits with haemostatic dressings and a tourniquet, a first aider on site, and the site location, grid reference and nearest accident and emergency department on the briefing.

Environment and neighbours

Dust, noise, vibration, waste, spills and hours of work.

Trees checked for nesting birds and other wildlife before work, and work changed or delayed if found. Fuel and oil refilled over a spill mat, away from drains and watercourses. Arisings chipped or removed; no burning without the client's agreement.

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BEFORE ANYONE CLIMBS

Pre-climb and aerial rescue check

Complete at the base of each tree before the climb starts. Nobody climbs until the named rescuer is ready.

CHECK	WHAT IS NEEDED	RESULT OR REFERENCE	CHECKED BY AND TIME
Tree inspection	Decay, cavities, cracks, deadwood and hung branches checked from the ground		
Wildlife	No active nests or roosts found, or the work changed		
Overhead lines	None within 10 metres, or the network operator procedure in place		
Drop zone	Barriered and signed; public access points covered		
Anchor points	Chosen in sound wood; two load-bearing anchors where feasible		
Climbing kit	Pre-use check done; LOLER examination in date		
Rigging kit	Rated for the loads planned; LOLER examination in date		
Saws	Chain brake, catcher, lockout and stop switch working		
Named rescuer	Competent, kitted and on the ground for the whole climb		
Rescue kit	At the base of the tree, checked and ready		
Emergency details	Grid reference, access point and nearest hospital on the briefing		

HSE TREE WORK GUIDANCE: AERIAL WORK, TREE CLIMBING, LIFTING EQUIPMENT IN ARBORICULTURE, AND FIRST AID AND EMERGENCY PROCEDURES.

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Briefed before the work starts

DATE AND TIME

A SIGNATURE AGAINST A REVISION, ON A DATE, BEFORE THE WORK STARTED, IS HOW A BRIEFING IS EVIDENCED

A pre-filled starting point, not legal advice. Edit it for the site and have it approved.