

INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEMS

The majority of aerial rescues are performed or assisted by fire rescue or high angle rescue teams. It is critical that arborists know the procedures these professionals use when called to perform a rescue and the roles arborists may serve in the rescue of another worker. Emergency medical professionals and fire/high angle rescue teams follow a command system during emergency situations. It is called the Incident Command System.

The Incident Command System is an established line of communication, duties and responsibilities during rescue situations. Every member has a particular role and outside assistance may be rejected as the arborist offering to help is an unknown to the team and their potential role is not clear nor abilities. Tree care companies should contact their local emergency rescue teams in their area and establish how the command system will work if an emergency occurs.



ARBORIST EDUCATION

Arborists often focus on speed when practicing aerial rescues. Unfortunately this has resulted in arborists being seriously injured or killed during practices. While there are rescue scenarios that require a rapid evacuation of the victim, in many situations it is far better for the victim and the rescuer if time is taken to properly evaluate the victim's condition, the safety of the environment and the resources available.

All arborists need to have first-aid and CPR training so they know how to respond to the victim's injuries and be able to effectively communicate with emergency medical and rescue personnel.

In addition, arborists need to be trained and practice conducting aerial rescues that fit all five of the general categories. Only practicing one, most commonly a rapid descend with a seriously injured victim, prepares an arborist for this situation only and limits their response when the accident conditions are different.

There is an immediate need within the industry for consistent training of emergency response to all categories of accidents. Furthermore, each arborist company should work closely with local emergency medical professionals when training for emergency situations.

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Aerial Rescue Protocol

EMERGENCY RESPONSE AERIAL RESCUE PROTOCOL

Operating power equipment in a swaying tree canopy is for the professional arborist, an individual who continuously sharpens his or her skills for working safely in this environment. Arboriculture is a high-risk occupation with an average annual fatality rate about 10 times the all-industry average. The non-fatal accident rate also exceeds the all-industry average and injuries are often severe with life-long consequences for the victims.

While less common than accidents on the ground, aerial accidents occur weekly and every arborist should know how to respond when faced with this situation.

The knowledge and skills for responding to these accidents, while not unique to our profession, are very specialized and require training and practice so an arborist can quickly and safely assist a victim.

This brochure will illustrate the five most common aerial rescue scenarios and the general process to respond to them.



AERIAL RESCUE CATEGORIES

These five categories represent the most common situations or injuries in which an aerial victim requires assistance. These are not listed in order of importance – arborists should be trained to respond to accidents in all five categories:

➤ **Trapped/Pinned**

The victim is trapped and or pinned by a log or branch or tangled in rigging.

➤ **Incapacitated**

The victim is unable to lower him/herself on his or her own due to an injury or medical condition.

➤ **Electrical Contact**

The victim has contacted an energized electrical conductor.

➤ **Trunk/Palm/Pole**

The victim is immobilized on a palm or limbless trunk.

➤ **Aerial Lift**

The victim is an aerial lift operator and is unable to lower his or herself due to injuries or has been ejected from the lift and is supported by their fall protection system.

CHECK CALL CARE

Regardless of the category in which the accident occurs these general steps should be followed:

- ✓ First the victim should be quickly **checked** for whatever injuries they may have. If the emergency involves an aerial situation, this should be initially done from the ground.
- ✓ Next, emergency medical personnel should be **called** and given as complete information as possible. This includes the location of the accident, the type of accident (e.g. the need for a high angle rescue as the victim is in the tree), victim condition as best known, and what basic emergency care is being given.
- ✓ Finally, **care** should be given to stabilize the victim. Unless there is a life-threatening medical condition that requires the victim to be immediately lowered to the ground, it is best to stabilize the victim in the tree or aerial lift and await further guidance from the emergency medical and rescue personnel who arrive at the scene.

