Notes

Further reading

Tree-climbing operations	AFAG401
Mobile elevating work platforms (MEWPs) for tree work	AFAG403
Emergency planning	AFAG802
Training and certification	AFAG805
First aid at work: Your questions answered	INDG214
Managing health and safety in forestry	INDG294
RIDDOR explained	HSE31
Aerial rescue guidance notes	1 901757 00 5

These publications are available from HSE Books - see 'Further information'.

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Further information

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e-mail: hseinformationservices@natbrit.com or write to HSE Information Services, Caerphilly Business Park, Caerphilly CF83 3GG.

This leaflet contains notes on good practice which are not compulsory but which you may find helpful in considering what you need to do.

This leaflet is available in priced packs of 15 from HSE Books, ISBN 0 7176 2644 X. Single free copies are also available from HSE Books.

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AFAG402 04/03 C150

Printed and published by the Health and Safety Executive

HSE

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Aerial tree rescue

AFAG
Arboriculture and Forestry Advisory Group

Introduction

This leaflet covers the safe working practices to be used by those involved in aerial tree rescue. It should be read in conjunction with AFAG leaflets 401 *Tree-climbing operations*, 403 *Mobile elevating work platforms (MEWPs) for tree work* and 802 *Emergency planning*.

Everyone involved in aerial tree rescue must have had appropriate training in all the tasks required (see AFAG leaflet 805 *Training and certification*).

A rescuer's safety takes priority at all times. It is strongly recommended that climbing teams regularly practise rescue techniques.

General

❑ **1 Aminimum of two people must be present during all tree-climbing operations. One of the ground team must be available, competent and equipped to perform an aerial rescue without delay**.

❑ **2** Ensure a designated and responsible person knows the daily work programme and agree with them a suitable contact procedure. Where reasonably practicable use a two-way radio or mobile phone and a pre-arranged call-in system. This is particularly important for remote sites where a check on the operator's safety is important.

❑ **3** As part of the risk assessment, the worksite and planned operation must be evaluated to establish the necessary emergency procedures for recovery and evacuation of casualties. All operators on site must have received adequate instruction and information and be trained in these procedures.

❑ **4** When an injured climber needs rescuing, ensure all possible precautions are taken to safeguard other members of the work team and any others entering or approaching the worksite. If overhead cables are involved, do not approach the work area. Stop work, assess the situation and contact the relevant electricity company.

❑ **5** Ensure no unauthorised people are within the working area.

❑ **6** The casualty's condition must be assessed. If necessary, call for the emergency services before starting the rescue, ensuring appropriate information is given regarding the location of the site and any particular access problems. Personal details about the casualty (names and any relevant medical history etc) as well as the approximate time of the accident, treatment given and any chemicals involved should also be provided.

Rescue equipment

❑ **7** The following rescue equipment must always be available at the worksite:

- Asuitable first-aid kit (see HSE leaflet INDG214 *First aid at work: Your questions answered*).
- Asuitable climber's harness and associated equipment, eg ropes, strops, karabiners or any other equipment that the rescuer is familiar with to help their rescue technique.
- Other items of equipment necessary for a rescuer to climb effectively, eg a ladder, climbing irons, ascenders or decenders.
- Asharp knife with a retractable blade.

❑ **8** Send for any additional rescue equipment that becomes necessary but is not available at the rescue site. If appropriate, other people in the vicinity may be directed to provide help.

Helping the casualty

❑ **9** Reassure the casualty and encourage self-help whenever possible.

❑ **10** Select a rescue method which does not put the rescuer at risk and minimises the risk of further injury to the casualty.

❑ **11** Only trained operators should use equipment such as mobile elevated work platforms and cranes for an aerial tree rescue (see AFAG leaflet 403).

Climbing to rescue the casualty

❑ **12** Select an efficient method of climbing the tree to reach the casualty as quickly as possible.

❑ **13** If specialised climbing aids are available and rescue personnel are trained in their use, use them to speed up access to the casualty.

❑ **14** Take account of hazards, such as severed, broken, hanging branches or the casualty's equipment that may create a risk.

❑ **15** Assess the tree(s) and select appropriate equipment to remove parts of the tree(s) which would impede the rescue operation. Other operators may do this if needed.

❑ **16** Use other personnel, if available, to prepare the equipment ready for use in the tree(s).

❑ **17** The casualty must be made safe from immediate hazards as soon as possible.

❑ **18** Assess the casualty's condition and prioritise first-aid treatment.

❑ **19** In some cases, especially those involving fracture, crush or possible spinal injury, only move the victim under medical supervision (eg a paramedic or the ambulance service).

Rescue

❑ **20** The rescuer should maintain close contact with the casualty to monitor changes in condition and to calm and control them if necessary.

❑ **21** Rescuers must be properly anchored at all times to ensure their own safety throughout the rescue operation. Anchor points must be selected to ensure they are capable of taking the anticipated loads during the rescue.

❑ **22** When the casualty is brought down from the tree, the rescuer and casualty should descend together to ease movement through the branches and to monitor the casualty's condition.

❑ **23** Densely branched trees may require alternative methods of rescue. Obstacles on the ground may dictate the most suitable method.

❑ **24** Continue to help the casualty under the direction of paramedics until the casualty is transported from the site.

❑ **25** Ensure the site is safe and secure before all personnel leave. Note the contact details of any witnesses. Where possible take photographs of the site. Do not use any of the equipment involved in the incident until it has been thoroughly examined by a competent person.

❑ **26** Notify management of the incident and record the occurrence in the accident book.

❑ **27** Report the incident to HSE in accordance with the requirements of the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR).

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