TOOLBOX TALK BRIEFKIT

Tree Climbing

A toolbox talk ready to deliver for foremen and supervisors. An 8 to 10 minute spoken script plus a briefing register for the team to sign.

REFERENCE	TBT-TREE-CLIMBING-001	**DURATION**	8 to 10 minutes
DATE		**SITE**	
TRAINER (PRINT)		**SIGNATURE**	

1 Why it matters

Tree climbing sits under the Industry Code of Practice for Arboriculture: Tree Work at Height, and AA Technical Guide 1: Tree Climbing and Aerial Rescue. The rules are plain. Nobody climbs unless they are trained and competent for the work in front of them, the climbing system has been inspected and is in date, and there is a rescue plan with a trained rescuer on the ground. A climber who is tired, working off a single anchor, or trusting kit they never checked is the one who gets hurt. We set all of that right on the ground, because there is no fixing it once you are forty feet up.

2 PPE required for this task

- Climbing helmet with chin strap (EN 12492)
- Harness and an inspected climbing system with a backup
- Eye and face protection
- Chainsaw leg protection when using a saw aloft (EN ISO 11393)
- Close fitting gloves
- Climbing boots with good grip

3 What to say

Spoken script for the supervisor. Read or paraphrase, in order.

1 Trained, competent, and the right ticket

You do not go up unless you are trained and competent for this climb, and signed off for it. Climbing is its own world, and running a saw aloft is another ticket again. If you are not certain the climb in front of you is one you are cleared for, you come to me first. No 'I have watched it done'.

2 Two anchors wherever you can get them

Set your system on sound anchor points, and get a second, independent anchor in wherever it is practical. Test any load bearing anchor with your full body weight close to the ground before you commit to it. A dead limb, a weak union or a cracked stem is not an anchor. If in doubt, it does not get used.

3 A backup so one failure never drops you

Run a primary climbing system with a separate backup, so that if one part lets go you are still held. Keep any possible fall down to 500mm or less by staying tied in short and above your anchor where you can. The point is simple. No single thing failing should ever put you on the ground.

4 Inspect the kit before it goes on

Every part of the climbing system gets a proper look before you put it on: ropes, harness, connectors, friction hitch or device, and every karabiner locking. Climbing kit is inspected regularly under LOLER and pulled out of service the moment it is damaged or past its date. A glazed patch on a rope or a frayed stitch line on a harness means it is finished, not that it will do.

5 Work positioned, not hanging on

Get into a stable work position and tied in properly before you start cutting. You should be held by the system, hands free and balanced, not gripping on with one hand and cutting with the other. If you cannot get into a safe position for the cut, you reposition, you do not stretch for it.

6 The saw aloft is a different animal

A saw in the tree is far more dangerous than one on the ground. Start it on the ground, or braked and against your leg, never drop start it in the air. Keep it well clear of your climbing line at all times, because a saw through your rope ends the same way a fall does. Keep it on a lanyard so it cannot drop onto the ground crew.

7 **Never alone, rescuer ready**

There is never a lone climber. Minimum two on any climb, with a trained rescuer on the ground, the rescue kit laid out at the base, and a plan we all agreed before you went up. If you are ever up there on your own, that is the job stopping, not carrying on.

8 **Watch the ground below you**

Nothing you cut, drop or lower goes down onto people. Keep the drop zone clear, keep talking to the ground crew, and agree your calls before you climb so a shout means the same thing to everyone. Tools on lanyards, and nothing loose in a pocket that can fall on the person below.

9 **If it is not right, it does not get climbed**

Wind, ice, a storm damaged tree, or you being worn out or unwell, any of those can make a climb a bad idea. A hung up storm tree under tension is a specialist job, not a have a go. If your gut says the tree or the day is wrong, say so. We would rather stand a job down than carry someone out of it.

4 Common mistakes to call out

Climbing on a single anchor with no independent backup

Trusting an anchor point that was never tested with body weight

Using climbing kit that is out of inspection date or visibly damaged

Cutting with a saw while holding on, instead of tied in and work positioned

Letting the running saw come near the climbing line

A lone climber with nobody trained to rescue on the ground

Dropping or lowering material onto an uncleared area below

Climbing a storm damaged or wind loaded tree as if it were routine

5 Watch on site this week

What the supervisor should be actively spotting on walk-arounds.

Climbers setting off on one anchor with no backup system

Anchor points chosen but never load tested near the ground

Climbing ropes or harnesses with no record of inspection

A climber gripping on and cutting one handed

Saws not on a lanyard, or started aloft by drop starting

Only one person on site able to climb

Ground crew standing inside the drop zone

6 Confirm the team understood

Ask one or two of these at the end of the talk.

1. Before you leave the ground, what has to be right? (Trained and competent for the climb, kit inspected and in date, sound anchors with a backup, and a rescue plan with a trained rescuer ready.)
2. Why do we test an anchor with body weight before trusting it? (So a weak limb or union fails at knee height where it is safe, not once you are high in the tree.)
3. What keeps a single failure from dropping you to the ground? (A primary system with a separate independent backup, and staying tied in short so any fall is 500mm or less.)
4. The saw needs to come up to you. What are the rules? (Started on the ground or braked against the leg, kept on a lanyard so it cannot fall, and kept well clear of the climbing line at all times.)

Briefing register: Tree Climbing

All operatives who attend this toolbox talk must sign below. Their signature confirms they have heard and understood the briefing.

Briefing delivered by:

Name (print):		**Date:**	
Signature:		**Time:**	
Site:			

Attendees. I confirm I have heard and understood the briefing detailed above:

#	Name (print)	Company / Role	Signature	Date	CSCS / Ticket No.
1					
2					
3					
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12					

Keep this register in the site Safety File. Additional sheets may be appended if more than 12 operatives are briefed.