

**Case 393. 55-year-old tree helper/grounds person died when he was struck by a tree branch during a tree trimming operation at a golf course.**

A 55-year-old male tree helper/grounds person died when he was struck by a tree branch during a tree trimming operation at a golf course. The decedent was part of a three-person crew; his coworkers included a “spotter” who was responsible for keeping golfers away from the area and the loader operator. The loader involved in the incident was a John Deere Loader Model 644 E. The work operation was trimming an approximate 50-foot-tall tree on the 8<sup>th</sup> green. The work crew had trimmed branches on the left side of the tree earlier in the day; the branches dropped directly to the ground because they fell into out of bounds territory or the rough. After lunch, they moved to the right side of the tree. The 8- to 12-inch diameter tree branch extended out and 30 feet above the 8<sup>th</sup> hole green. Not wanting to damage the green when the limb was cut, a chain was attached to the limb and the bucket. The decedent was standing in the bucket which was elevated 10-12 feet using a 16- to 18-inch Husqvarna 450 chainsaw to trim the tree limb. Apparently, the chain was under tension. After cutting approximately three-quarters of the way through the tree limb, the limb and tree bark broke away from the tree, and swung back towards the loader. The decedent turned toward the side of the bucket, and the tree limb struck him in the back. He then fell from the elevated bucket. The spotter and the loader operator summoned emergency responders. While awaiting emergency responder arrival, the crewmembers performed CPR. The decedent was declared dead at the scene.

MIOSHA General Industry Safety and Health Division issued the following Serious citations to the employer at the conclusion of its investigation.

SERIOUS: TRACTORS, GI PART 22, RULE 408.12239(6):

An employee shall not be transported in a front-end loader bucket.

(An employee was raised to an elevated position in the John Deere 644E front-end loader bucket to perform tree trimming tasks on the 8th hole green of the XYZ Country Club.)  
*MIFACE removed the name of the country club.*

SERIOUS: TREE TRIMMING AND REMOVAL, GI PART 53.

- RULE 408.15311(a):

An employer shall provide training to each new employee regarding the requirements of this standard, the job hazards and safeguards before starting his assigned job. A job briefing shall be conducted before any tree job involving unusual hazards is begun.

(There was no training provided to an employee prior to performing tree trimming operations at the XYZ Country Club.)

- RULE 408.15311(c):

An employer shall develop rescue procedures such as, but not limited to, removal of injured, stricken or electrically shocked employees from work positions aloft.

(There were no rescue procedures developed for employees that were engaged in tree trimming operations at the XYZ Country Club. An employee suffered fatal injuries when working from an elevated position while standing in the bucket of the John Deere 644E front-end loader.)

- RULE 408.15313(2):

Head protection shall be provided and used, as prescribed in general industry safety standard, Part 33. Personal Protective Equipment, being R 408.13301 et seq. of the Michigan Administrative Code, by an employee working on any operation covered by this part.

(There was no head protection available and utilized by an employee while performing the tree trimming operations at the XYZ Country Club.)

- RULE 408.15333(2):

Branches bent under tension shall be considered hazardous and the situation corrected.

(An employee connected one end of a chain to the bucket of the John Deere 644E front-end loader and the other end to a synthetic strap connected to a tree limb. The slack in the chain was removed, creating tension on the limb in an attempt to prevent the cut limb from falling onto the 8th hole green.)

**SERIOUS: PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT, GI PART 33, RULE 408.13308(1):**

An employer shall assess the workplace to determine if hazards are present, or are likely to be present, that necessitate the use of personal protective equipment.

(There was an incomplete personal protective equipment assessment. The required personal protective equipment for hazards associated with tree trimming was not identified prior to performing tree trimming operations at the XYZ Country Club.)