

Ash Dieback Guidance/advice - for Hi-Line Managers Field Managers and Operatives

Planning of works and managing the potential risks identified below have been provided by Arboricultural Association working group and are currently the most up to date. Last updated: 27/11/2019

1. Ensure **you** can identify ash trees, ash dieback, and other diseases associated with ash such as honey fungus, giant ash bracket and shaggy bracket correctly. Read *Fungi on Trees - An Arborists' Field Guide* as a resource.
2. Undertake a visual tree assessment (VTA), pre-condition assessment, (surveyor), pre-cutting assessment (operative), examining the health and structural condition of the tree. Pay particular attention to the appearance of foliage at branch tips, an abundance of epicormic growth within the trees crown and main stem, the basal condition, the presence of deadwood, and discoloured or fractured unions within the canopy.
3. When planning, resourcing and managing tree work have regard to the [Industry Code of Practice 'Tree Work at Height'](#). The ICoP dec19 draft – tree working at height document is currently being circulated for consultation and will be amended in due course. Adhere to the tree work at height risk hierarchy (see below) to ensure safe and effective tree work.
4. All site personnel should contribute to job planning, raise points of concern and stop work if something is unclear or a safety issue arises.
5. Site layout, access, egress, land use and terrain should be carefully considered as part of the site survey, informing the decision-making process regarding equipment access, management of arisings, available working space, ground conditions and the load-bearing capacity of surfaces.
6. From the start of work, the layout and organisation of the work area must protect all parties from the risk of falling objects.
7. Any exclusion zone should, where reasonably practicable, be clearly marked, signed and guarded and should afford suitable protection to all parties. additional resources may be required on site, such as lookouts, to help manage any risk associated with anyone possibly entering the work site, including the public.
8. The selection of any load bearing anchor point should be carried out in accordance with current good practice. In particular, anchor points should be visually inspected, selected as capable of withstanding any foreseeable loading and loaded with a climber's full body weight prior to committing to that anchor. Read the Arboricultural Association [two-rope working – an update](#) which can also be found online. Contact Hi-Line training if you require an update on climbing techniques and approach for use of two lines.
9. During tree climbing operations, climbers must constantly assess the suitability of any anchor chosen and its intended use e.g. during branch walking where loading on an anchor is likely to be different to that of during access or descent. Situations where dynamic loading to an anchor may occur i.e. slack in a climber's system, working above an anchor, must be avoided, along with horizontal loading of an anchor, to avoid any potential bending moment.
10. The use of dismantling techniques whereby the tree is to be used as the same anchor as the climber must only be undertaken following a robust risk assessment that has discounted safer ways of working. Where using 'free-fall' techniques, take

account of the risks associated with debris breaking up as it hits the ground, and any extension to drop zones that may be required to account for this.

11. Where practicable, use machinery such as a harvester or tree shear to fell trees. Where this isn't possible use recognised tree felling techniques to maintain control of the tree during the felling operation considering the effects of a barber chair and brittle hinge fibres. Modify felling technique to account for this e.g. use of holding cuts, thicker hinge dimensions.
12. The suitability of using felling aids such as wedges that may need to be driven into the back of a tree resulting in stem shake, or assisted felling techniques whereby a force may be applied to the stem prior to felling must be carefully considered in regard to brittle hinge fibres.
13. Planning of tree felling operations must include provision for good escape routes so any loose or breaking branches can be avoided if they fall.
14. Guidance on safety measures to undertake during felling can be found on the Forestry Industry Safety Accord (FISA) website. Read [Safety Guidance for Managers – Felling Dead Ash](#) which can be found online.

Tree work at height - risk hierarchy



15. When working through the hierarchy, the competent and/or responsible person must select any work method and/ or equipment by taking into account the risks associated with its installation, use and/or removal once work is finished, including any rescue requirements for such a method and/or equipment.
16. It should also be ensured that for any work method chosen **collective protection measures**¹ have priority over **personal measures**.² Whilst working through the hierarchy, the responsible and/or competent person must determine the risks and reasonably practicable control measures associated with each level and justify why a work technique or method that sits higher in the hierarchy has not been selected.

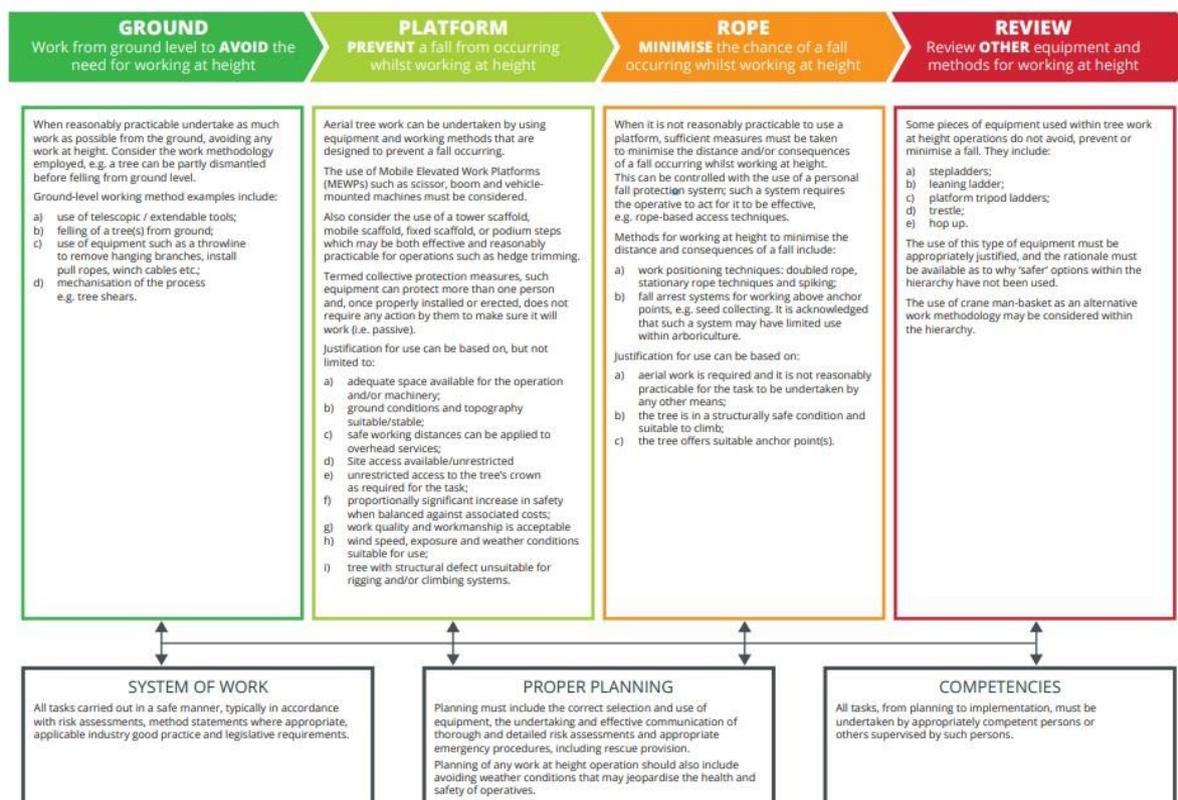
1 collective protection measures: equipment which can protect more than one person and, once properly installed or erected, does not require any action by them to make sure it will work (passive).

2 personal measures: measures that are generally active (i.e. measures that require the user to do something in order to work effectively, e.g. knot tied and karabiner attached; friction hitch advanced manually) and will only protect one user at a time.

17. Whilst working through the hierarchy, the responsible and/or competent person must determine the risks and reasonably practicable control measures associated with each level, and justify why a work technique or method that sits higher in the hierarchy has not been selected. The implementation and working through a hierarchy requires a step wise approach as detailed below to ensure safe and effective tree work

18. Decisions on working at height methods must be based on both the pre-condition assessment of the tree and preliminary work site assessment.

Risk hierarchy implementation – step wise approach



For further technical information and images

To download the *Industry Code of Practice 'Tree Work at Height'* please visit:

www.trees.org.uk/ICoP

To download the *Two-rope working update* please visit:

www.trees.org.uk/News-Blog/Latest-News/Two-rope-working-%E2%80%93-an-update

To download the *Ash dieback practical guidance* please visit:

www.trees.org.uk/Trees.org.uk/media/Trees.org.uk/Documents/eBooks/AshDieback-GuidanceNote-web.pdf

To download the Forestry Commission - The management of individual ash trees affected by ash dieback please visit:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/managing-ash-in-woodlands-in-light-of-ash-dieback-operations-note-46

To download the Safety Guidance for Managers – Felling Dead Ash guidance please visit:

www.ukfisa.com