



SAFETY ALERT

Tree Felling

Accidents when conducting tree work are not uncommon. This alert highlights the importance of maintaining an exclusion zone and effective communication when felling trees and branches. A worker (not a DRA member or activity) was struck and killed by a falling tree while he was helping the feller cut down trees and create a burn pile. The feller had not seen the incident and discovered the deceased within the exclusion zone. This and other regular accidents highlight the hazards and risks associated with one of DRA's key tasks.

There are multiple warnings across jurisdictions as to the hazardous nature of tree felling citing regular accidents often amongst experienced people. They emphasise that the risk is heightened when felling is an occasional task or when conducted by operators with limited skills and experience. There are specific warnings about hazardous tree following storms and fires and the need for specialist assessment prior to work commencing.

In accordance with advice from Safework Australia and Codes of Practice endorsed by state and territory regulators, it is appropriate to remind all personnel of the following:

- Tree felling must be conducted (as a minimum) following the requirements of the relevant Safe Work Method Statement (SWMS).
- A Safety 5 risk assessment must be conducted to identify and treat any additional risks.
- A person conducting tree felling must be qualified and authorised by DRA to undertake felling.
- No person should fell a tree which is beyond their capability.
- Hazardous trees (including those damaged by fire, storm or drought) must be assessed and felled by an operator qualified to Advanced Felling or an arborist.
- An exclusion zone (also known as a felling zone or safe work area) of a minimum of twice the tree height is to be maintained around the tree. **This excludes any other person including spotters or assistants.** An exception applies during the conduct of formal training of tree fellers and when specifically approved mentoring activities are authorised by National Director of Field Operations.

The Operations Team
5 August 2021

