



Training notes from the woods & the classroom

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Limbing Trees

Although it is apparent that the most dangerous situations while operating a chainsaw usually occur while felling the tree, limbing the tree can also create dangerous situations and can result in serious injury. And remember, it can include being struck by branches or dead trees as well as being cut. So how can we prevent injuries while limbing? Let's review some important pointers to keep us from making deadly mistakes.

As in felling trees, hazards will present themselves during limbing as well. So be sure to look for obvious and hidden hazards. Those will include loose limbs hanging above the work area created when the tree fell. Also look for dead stubs or dead trees that may have been partially dislodged or loosened, spring poles, branches under pressure, hidden holes or obstacles under branches, etc.

NEVER move back into the felling area to begin limbing until the entire area is settled and you have assessed it. Remove or avoid all hazards that have developed.

After you have decided it is safe to enter the work area, use the following safety tips to help prevent injuries:

1. Make sure your footing is sound. Use care when getting near the top of the tree when limbs/leaves can hide potential situations that can affect good footing.
2. Start limbing from the butt end of the tree and work toward the top.
3. Always stay on the uphill side of the tree. Sometime branches on the downhill side of the tree are supporting the tree or are preventing the tree (or log if you are bucking the tree) from rolling. Releasing those branches can provide a serious hazard to the sawyer.
4. Whenever possible, stand in a clear area or clear your footing area.
5. Limb from the left side of the trunk whenever possible. This position is much safer because it lends itself to more natural working positions.
6. Make sure the saw bar is on the opposite side of the tree before moving forward. When moving through cluttered areas, apply the chain brake, and do not move while the saw is on your side of the trunk.
7. To prevent kickbacks while limbing, do not limb with the kickback corner of the bar and make sure the saw is at full throttle when limbing.
8. Cut supporting limbs last using extreme caution as the logs/trees may shift or roll.
9. Keep a minimum of two tree lengths away from other fellers/falling trees.
10. When cutting large limbs, be alert for the chain binding and/or kickback. Using a technique called "limb lock" will help prevent this from happening. When cutting limbs under tension, make the first cut on the compression side of the branch. Make the cut about one third of the way through the branch, but be careful that your saw doesn't get

pinched!! The second cut is made on the tension side to bypass the first cut and offset to create a “lock” to prevent the branch from shooting out and striking you.

If these steps are followed, and we use common sense when limbing, we can reduce the number and severity of injuries. Remember to work in the most comfortable position possible, and identify the things that can create hazards, and avoid or remove them – OR DON’T DO THE JOB. More about bucking in our next article. Stay Safe!

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Minnesota Logger Education Program
Dave Chura, Executive Director
301 W 1st Street; Suite 510
Duluth, MN 55802
218-722-5442 · dchura@mllep.org · www.mllep.org