

## Pruning Safety

Pruning accidents can cause lacerations of the eye, hand, or face, along with strains, slips, trips and falls, and possible electrocution. Permanent disability can result when employees fall from ladders and pruning towers, or suffer amputations and lacerations.

These accidents devastate both workers and employers. Injured employees experience pain, suffering, and loss of income. Employers incur steep costs, such as hiring, training, loss of productivity, and escalating workers' compensation premiums.

### TRUE STORY

An employee was carrying pruning shears in a vineyard when he tripped and fell on the open blades. Because he was holding the pruning shears with the blades pointing up toward his body, he lacerated his hand as he fell. Yet he was lucky: This injury could have been much more severe.

### What could have prevented this accident?

- Train employees to carry pruning tools with the blades pointed down.
- Seek early detection of unsafe work habits. Recognize good work habits, and discipline employees who engage in unsafe behavior.
- Train employees to notice unsafe behavior, and intervene to prevent accidents, when necessary.

### Training for Safety

Train employees to conduct tool and equipment inspection, and to use, transport, and store pruning tools properly. Power tool operation (including chainsaws, power-pole saws, and pneumatic or hydraulic shears) requires specific training, because these tools can pose serious hazards.

Anyone who operates hedging and topping machines must have experience and/or thorough training and adequate supervision. All operators should read a machine's manual before use.

Elevated platforms may lack stability or pose other safety risks. Operators must have experience and/or thorough training.

### EMPLOYER/EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

#### Employer:

- Conduct initial orientation training on correct pruning tool handling.

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- Supervise workers in vineyards and orchards. Identify hazards, such as uneven terrain and high voltage electrical lines in the area. Alert employees to such hazards.
- Recognize and praise employees who demonstrate safe work habits, and discipline those who exhibit unsafe habits.
- Train employees to take responsibility for safety by encouraging them to remind each other to correct hazardous acts.

**Employee:**

- Take proper care of pruning tools and inspect them periodically.
- Make sure to use protective sheaths and other carrying equipment.
- Follow training instructions, and remind co-workers to work safely.

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