

The Tree Care Industry Association (TCIA) reviewed 47 civilian tree care accidents reported by the media in 2012. Twenty-five of these accidents were fatal. The average age of the victims was only 61.

These sobering statistics are a stark reminder of the inherent dangers for one attempting tree care or tree removal and highlights the need for tree owners to seek out tree care companies with the proper qualifications and equipment to handle the work safely.

Tree care is undoubtedly one of the most dangerous jobs in the U.S. Pruning large limbs, felling trees and especially climbing into trees are hazardous activities even for trained professionals. Untrained consumers should think twice before trying to duplicate the work of professionals, as evidenced by the graphic below:

Major causes of accidents:

- Felling trees with a chainsaw may look easy on reality TV, but it's very easy to get it wrong. Two-thirds of the time, the victim was struck by the tree when it fell in an unexpected direction. Directional tree felling with a chain saw requires a high level of competency and plenty of experience.
- Three homeowners were killed due to a phenomenon known as "barber chair" - when forces acting on the tree cause it to split and kick back violently before it can be completely cut.
- Three DIY-ers were killed when trees near the one they were cutting fell on them, likely due to the movement of the tree being cut.
- The thought of cutting with a chain saw from a ladder makes even a professional cringe. It's easy to lose one's balance, and the cut branch typically falls straight down, hitting the ladder with great force.

Tree care without proper training or equipment is asking for trouble. Consumers contemplating tree work should assess the risk for attempting the work. Indicators of high risk include:

- using a chain saw
- working off the ground
- cutting off heavy branches
- felling any tree
- using unfamiliar machinery such as platforms lifts and brush chippers

Anyone who is at all uncertain about what could happen by attempting their own tree work, should contact a qualified tree care professional for help.