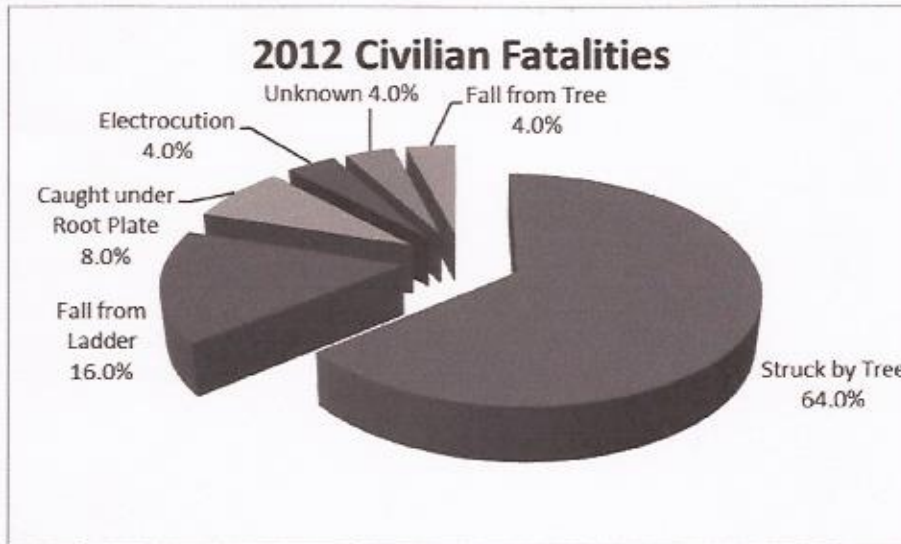




What Kills Tree Care DIY-ers?

A summary of 2012 fatal accidents to homeowners performing tree care.

The Tree Care Industry Association (TCIA) reviewed 47 tree care accidents involving civilians and reported in the media in calendar year 2012. Twenty-five (25) of these were fatal. The average age of the "Tree Care DIY-er" victim was 58, considering all accidents. In the fatal accidents, the average age was even higher – 61.



The trade/profession of tree trimming and removal ranks as fourth or fifth most dangerous in the U.S., and that is among people who supposedly know what they are doing. That speaks to the technical difficulty and inherent risk in this sort of work.

Investigating the major causes of accidents in the graphic above a little further...

- Felling trees with a chainsaw may look easy on those reality and DIY shows, 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 chainsaw requires a high level of competency and plenty of experience. With so much that can go wrong and so much at stake, never attempt tree felling unless you have plenty of prior experience.
- Three homeowners were killed due to a phenomenon known as "barber chair" – that's when forces acting on the tree cause it to split and kick back violently before it can be completely cut. Beware of leaning trees and never exert more than a gentle pull on a tree with a rope set high in the canopy to help it fall in the right direction.



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- Three DIY-ers were killed when trees near the one they were cutting fell on them. Check the tree being felled for dead and broken limbs. Check the surrounding areas for other dead or “lodged” trees – those are trees that are broken off and leaning on others.
- The thought of cutting with a chainsaw 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. The best advice to a DIY is never work from a ladder, and under no circumstances should you use a chainsaw while on a ladder.
- There are dangers even when you stay on the ground. Be sure of your footing and never walk with a running chainsaw unless the chain brake is engaged.
- Always check your work area for hazards such as electrical wires, hornet’s nests, etc.
- If you use a pole saw or one of those extensible chain saws, beware of gravity! That branch can fall faster than you can react and get out from underneath.
- Never use a chainsaw above shoulder height.
- Never allow the tip of the chainsaw bar to contact any solid object – this can kick the spinning chain into you much faster than you can react.
- Wear appropriate personal protective equipment such as a hardhat, eye protection, hearing protection and chainsaw protective chaps or pants.
- Never, ever work alone!

Doing things oneself can be fun, rewarding and even profitable. But given the risks, tree trimming and removal should be removed from the to-do list and left to the professional.