ARBORISTS — GUIDE

Hiring tree work safely

Questions about site hazards, utilities, rescue planning and public access before a crew starts.

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Tree work needs a site plan. Ask the company how it will protect workers, residents, neighbours and visitors. Keep this discussion separate from the price. A low price does not answer a safety question.

What the OSHA source covers

Oregon OSHA's *Tree and shrub services* page identifies its rules for trimming, pruning, bracing, removal and tree surgery. Its *Landscaping Contractors and Tree and Shrub Services* guide explains professional work practices, electrical inspection, climbing and tree-falling plans. This is Oregon workplace guidance. It is not a statement of the law in every US state, Canada or the UK. Oregon OSHA topic page, fetched 2026-11-10; Oregon OSHA guide, September 2022; fetched 2026-11-10.

Use those topics to ask questions. Do not use a short homeowner guide as training for climbing, chainsaw work or line clearance.

Ask about utilities first

Tell the company about visible wires and known underground services. Ask who will inspect the site for electrical hazards and contact the utility. Oregon OSHA's guide calls for electrical hazard checks before work around or in a tree. If the answer is only “we work around wires all the time”, ask for the actual plan and responsible person.

Do not attempt to move a branch off a line. Keep people clear and contact the utility or emergency service for immediate danger. Leave technical clearances and work methods to the qualified crew and utility.

Ask how people will be kept clear

Ask where the work zone will be and how access will be controlled. Discuss doors, shared paths, parked vehicles, delivery routes and neighbour access. Ask who will tell occupants when work starts and when the area can reopen. Oregon OSHA's guide addresses traffic controls and keeping workers clear during tree-falling. Your contractor should explain its plan for this site.

As a property manager, send the agreed access plan to occupants. Give the crew a site contact. Do not walk into the work area to ask a question. Use the agreed contact method.

Ask about the crew and rescue plan

Ask who supervises the work and whether climbing work has a rescue plan. Oregon OSHA's guide discusses tree-top rescue training and another worker nearby for work aloft. Ask about

training, equipment checks and the response if a worker cannot descend. Do not ask the crew to demonstrate hazardous techniques for reassurance.

Request current insurance details and confirm the work is within the cover described by the insurer. Ask whether subcontractors will attend and who is responsible for them. Keep the company identity and written scope with your safety questions.

Stop when the plan is unclear

Before work, resolve uncertainty about the tree, utility contact, site access and permitted scope. If the work changes, ask for a pause and a revised plan. After completion, ask when occupants may re-enter and whether anything remains restricted. A paid directory label is not a safety audit.

Sources

- Oregon OSHA, *Tree and shrub services*, fetched 2026-11-10: https://osha.oregon.gov/Pages/topics/tree-and-shrub-services.aspx
- Oregon OSHA, *Landscaping Contractors and Tree and Shrub Services*, September 2022; fetched 2026-11-10: https://osha.oregon.gov/OSHAPubs/2942.pdf

Frequently asked questions

Can I help the crew by holding a rope or clearing branches?

Ask the supervisor to keep you outside the work zone. Do not join technical work without the training and arrangements the task needs.