



# Safety Note

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES  
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY



Safety Note # 14

## PRUNING SAFETY



Data from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission indicate approximately 24,000 people nationwide received hospital treatment for pruning injuries during 2003. Of this total, about 14,000 injuries were to fingers and 70% of the injuries involved lacerations. **English and Spanish language safety videos on tree care safety are also available from the ANR Environmental Health & Safety Library at (530) 752-3933.**

### Pre-Pruning Activities

- Pruning typically involves the use of shears and saws, loppers, and manual and electric hedge trimmers. Accordingly, pruning tools have sharp edges and pinch points and in some cases an additional electrical hazard.
- Thoroughly review and understand information from the pruning tool brochure or booklet provided by the manufacturer, with particular attention given to descriptions of safety procedures.
- Before using, always inspect pruning tools to determine if they are functioning properly, including assuring all moveable joints are lubricated and blades are sharpened adequately. For electric equipment, inspect the electrical cord and plug for defects.
- If ladders are to be used in pruning activities, then review Safety Note #3 Ladder Safety.
- California Code of Regulations, Title 8, Section 3428 addresses operating rules for tree maintenance.

### Pruning Precautions

- Wear appropriate personal protective equipment, including safety glasses with side shields, hard hat, gloves, long-sleeved shirt, long pants, and steel-toed boots.
- Never prune trees or branches within 10 feet of power lines. Contact your local utility company to secure appropriately qualified tree trimming services.
- Do not carry pruning tools in your hands while climbing ladders and maintain a safe working distance from other workers when using hand pruning tools.
- Carefully inspect the work area to locate any signs of bees, wasps, or other potential animal hazards.
- Do not attempt to cut branches bigger than the pruning tool was designed to cut.
- Before making a cut, always know the location of your hands and fingers.
- Do not purposefully drop pruning tools from ladders.
- Always carry pruning tools with the sharp end pointed down.
- Prior to dropping a branch, an audible warning such as “timber” shall be given.
- Take frequent breaks when performing repetitive tasks. Do not overtire yourself.
- Be aware of the weather conditions and drink adequate fluids to prevent heat exhaustion and dehydration.