

TREE NEWS

YOU CAN USE

JULY 2026

PPE: THE LAST LINE OF DEFENSE OR THE FIRST SIGN OF PROFESSIONALISM?

Most of us know someone with a chainsaw who is willing to help out with tree work around the house. While that may seem like a straightforward way to save money, tree work is an inherently technical and dangerous profession. Hiring someone based solely on cost can put both people and property at unnecessary risk. One of the easiest ways to recognize a professional tree care company is by looking at the personal protective equipment (PPE) its crew wears.

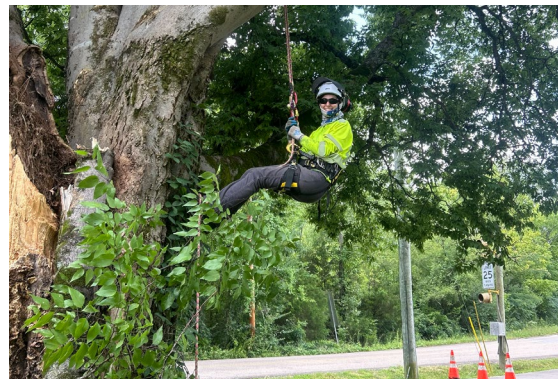
Professional arborists rely on training, proper equipment, and careful planning to perform tree work safely. PPE is not the first line of defense; it is the last line of defense when something unexpected happens.

- A hard hat is one of the most visible pieces of PPE. Even routine pruning can send dead limbs or broken branches to the ground without warning. A properly fitted hard hat helps protect workers from serious head injuries.
- If chainsaws are being used on the ground, workers should also be wearing chainsaw-resistant chaps. These chaps are woven with specialized fibers designed to bind up the saw if the moving chain contacts the leg. This greatly reduces the severity of many injuries.
- Tree work is also noisy. Chainsaws, woodchippers, and stump grinders produce sound levels capable of causing permanent hearing loss. Hearing protection, whether earplugs or earmuffs, helps prevent irreversible damage from repeated exposure.
- Finally, safety glasses protect workers from sawdust, wood chips, and other flying debris generated during pruning and removals. Clear vision is essential, and eye injuries can occur in an instant.

[ANSI Z133.1](#) is the guiding document for regulating safe tree work practices in the U.S., but as a homeowner, you don't need to know every industry standard to recognize a company that values safety. A crew wearing proper PPE shows professionalism and an attention to detail.

A company that is willing to overlook its own employees' safety may also be more likely to cut corners elsewhere, including protecting your home, vehicles, landscaping, and other property. While PPE alone does not guarantee the highest quality of work, it shows an understanding of the hazards involved in this industry.

When comparing estimates, remember that the lowest price is not always the best value. Professional tree care is an investment in your trees, your property, and the people performing the work. Choosing a company that takes safety seriously is one of the simplest ways to make a more informed hiring decision.



CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

Dr. Sharon Jean-Philippe
Lee Rumble
Jaq Payne

Dr. Natalie Bumgarner
Neal Vercler
Kayla Stuart

Sam Adams
Walker Fowler
Mel Cooke

SPONSORED BY:

KNOX COUNTY
U-EXTENSION
INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURE
THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

T
SCHOOL OF
NATURAL
RESOURCES

T THE UNIVERSITY OF
TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE
FACILITIES SERVICES

PLANT SCIENCES
U-IA INSTITUTE OF
AGRICULTURE
THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE