

METHOD STATEMENT · UNITED KINGDOM · 2026

Tree Felling & Sectional Dismantling Method Statement

UK template for an arboriculture tree felling / sectional dismantling method statement — HSE AFAG guidance, NPTC / City & Guilds chainsaw competence, MEWP / rope-and-harness access, target-area control.

Tree work is one of the highest-fatality sectors in the UK — typically several fatalities per year per HSE statistics. A felling method statement is required for any work beyond routine ground-level pruning and is the primary evidence of competent planning under HSWA 1974 s.2/3, MHSWR 1999 reg 3, WAHR 2005 (for aerial work), and PUWER 1998 / LOLER 1998 (for chainsaws and MEWPs). The document follows the HSE Arboriculture and Forestry Advisory Group (AFAG) safety guides, which are the de facto sector standard. This template covers the site survey, the felling method selection (straight fell, sectional dismantle, rigging-down), the target-area control, the rescue plan, and the public / property protection where the work is in a domestic, highway or other publicly-accessible setting.

Document structure a reviewer expects

- 1. Site and tree survey**
Species, height, DBH, lean, decay, root-plate condition, target area, services overhead and underground, wind forecast.
- 2. Felling-method selection**
Straight fell / sectional dismantle / rigging-down — justified by the survey outcome.
- 3. Target-area control**
Exclusion zone (two tree-heights min for free-fell), marshals, signal sequence, physical barriers.
- 4. Highway / public protection**
Chapter 8 TM, lane / footway closure, NRSWA permit reference, diversion route.
- 5. Overhead services**
DNO consultation, isolation reference where required, safe minimum approach distance.
- 6. Aerial access method**
Tree climbing (CS38 + rope and harness) or MEWP (CS47) — anchors, lanyards, second line, MEWP make / model and pre-use check.
- 7. Chainsaw and rigging equipment**
Chainsaw make / model and chain spec, PPE (helmet to EN 397, visor, ear defence, chainsaw trousers Type A or C, chainsaw boots), rigging line and friction device.
- 8. Operative competence**
NPTC / C&G; certificates by named operative — CS30/31, CS38, CS39, CS41, CS47 as relevant — with certificate numbers and expiry dates.
- 9. Aerial rescue plan**
Named second climber, rescue route, descender / prusik / knife, suspension-trauma protocol, emergency rendezvous point.

10. Waste and arisings

Chipper / mulcher operation (PUWER), chipper feed-roller emergency stop check, transport off-site.

Common reasons reviewers reject this document

- Single climber on site — no second competent climber for aerial rescue.
- Overhead services not addressed — no DNO consultation, no safe-distance assessment.
- Generic 'felling method' bullet — no justification of straight-fell vs sectional based on the site survey.
- Aerial rescue plan absent or 'call 999' only.
- NPTC / C&G; certificates referenced as 'all operatives trained' without named individuals, certificate numbers and expiry dates.
- No Chapter 8 traffic management for highway-adjacent work.

UK regulation reference

Work at Height Regulations 2005 SI 2005/735

Applies to all aerial work — climbing and MEWP.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2005/735/contents/made>

Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER) SI 1998/2306

Chainsaws, chippers, MEWPs — selection, inspection, training.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1998/2306/contents/made>

Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998 (LOLER) SI 1998/2307

MEWPs used to lift people — six-monthly thorough examination.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1998/2307/contents/made>

HSE AFAG safety guides — Arboriculture and Forestry HSE AFAG

The sector good-practice guides for felling, climbing, MEWP work and rescue — referenced as the recognised standard.

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/treework/safety-topics/>

Chapter 8 — Traffic Signs Manual: Traffic safety measures and signs for road works DfT Traffic Signs Manual

The standard reference for highway-adjacent work area sign-off.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/traffic-signs-manual>

ENA — Look out, Look up! Working safely near overhead lines ENA guidance

Safe minimum approach distances for overhead electricity lines.

<https://www.energynetworks.org/look-out-look-up>

Frequently asked questions

Can a single arborist work alone on a tree?

Not for any aerial chainsaw work. AFAG guidance requires a second competent climber on site, current within a defined response time, capable of aerial rescue. For ground-level work alone (e.g. CS30 cross-cutting on a windblown stem) the assessment must address lone working, communication and emergency response.

What's the difference between CS38 and CS39?

CS38 covers tree climbing and aerial rescue using rope-and-harness — entry-level aerial competence. CS39 covers the use of a chainsaw from a rope and harness — required to actually cut from a climbing position. Both are

needed for sectional dismantling by climbing; a CS38-only climber can ascend but not cut from height.

Do I need a permit for tree work near a highway?

Yes — either a Chapter 8 lane / footway closure under a Section 50 / Section 81 NRSWA permit (England / Wales) or the equivalent in Scotland / Northern Ireland. The method statement names the permit reference and the diversion route. Highway authority sign-off may also be required for veteran trees or Tree Preservation Order (TPO) work.

What about TPOs and conservation areas?

Tree Preservation Order (TPO) trees and trees in a Conservation Area require six weeks' written notice to the local planning authority before any work (or an application for consent for TPO work). The method statement should reference the application / notification number.

How close can I work to an overhead electricity line?

ENA guidance gives safe minimum approach distances — typically several metres for low voltage and larger for 11 kV and above. Where the work cannot maintain the distance, the line is isolated via the DNO. Never assume a line is dead and never approach a fallen conductor — treat it as live until the DNO confirms otherwise.

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