
Basic Safety Protocol

Posted by moss - 07/03/2008 09:54am

Ok, everyone has their favorite climbing systems, favorite carabiner gate, rope, harness etc. Without prescribing what kind of technique or gear a climber uses, what are the most fundamental safety rules or protocols for a recreational technical tree climber?

I'm hoping that we can come up with a useful basic safety protocol. This is not to teach people how to climb or configure gear, this is to create awareness about basic concepts to stay alive while climbing recreationally in a tree.

I'm kicking it off...

1. Do a thorough inspection and assessment of the tree, if you are not qualified to do so, find someone who is.
2. Use rated rope and gear designed for the task.
3. Set your rope on a live, structurally sound branch no less than 6" diameter.
4. Set your rope close to the branch union with the trunk.
5. Wear a helmet rated for impact from above.
6. Inspect all gear and life support connections before leaving the ground.
7. Always remain tied in while in the tree.
8. Do not climb above your tie-in.
9. If you perform a switchover from one tie-in to another, do not detach from the first tie-in until you have inspected your new attachment points (harness and tree) and fully loaded the second tie-in. That means vertical hang with your feet off the tree. The first tie-in is slacked just enough that you can fully load the second system.
10. Be aware that if you move horizontally out on a limb that a swing back to the trunk can generate force similar to falling to the ground.
11. Arborist static and semi-static climbing ropes and harnesses (that we generally use) are not designed to absorb a fall, they are rated for "work positioning". Do not climb in such a way that exposes you to a fall onto a slack rope. Always remove slack from the rope when you climb with your hands and feet on the tree.

Note: Experienced climbers develop their own style and methods known as "individual climber style", novice climbers do not have that luxury. Beginner climbers do not have the practical experience to make informed decisions involving higher risk in the tree. It doesn't matter how smart or capable you are in other areas of life. For discussion on individual climber style and risk read Joe Maher's article here:
The Double Standard

-moss

Re:Basic Safety Protocol

Posted by treeman - 07/03/2008 10:21pm

Splendid topic Moss!

#6- I would change it to "inspect your gear before, during, and after each climb". This applies especially to the rope. I do a tactile inspection with my finger tips for rope defects, even when I am packing my rope back into the rope bag. I have caught defects and nicks during my climb when the rope is fully loaded too.

Re:Basic Safety Protocol

Posted by treeweasel - 07/28/2008 06:01pm

I am just a beginner, so I hope I don't seem like too much of a "smarty pants" by offering a safety rule. This one comes naturally for me, precisely because I am a beginner and it actually might be just common sense:
"Do not attempt climbing when tired or in a hurry, this can greatly increase potential for mistakes".

I've had to rest a few days before attempting new climbing technique because I wore myself out. If I go out late in the day when I'm tired or still sore from climbing the day before I risk taking a "short cut" rather than doing the safest procedure.

My two cents.

TW

=====

Re:Basic Safety Protocol

Posted by moss - 07/29/2008 04:07pm

I revised the Basic Safety Protocol list to include Treeman's and TreeWeasel's comments. That idea of this list is to cover the most basic and important safety issues and is not intended to be a comprehensive tree climbing safety guide.

1. Do a thorough inspection and assessment of the tree, if you are not qualified to do so, find someone who is.
2. Use rated rope and gear designed for the task.
3. Set your rope on a live, structurally sound branch no less than 6" diameter.
4. Set your rope close to the branch union with the trunk.
5. Wear a helmet rated for impact from above.
6. Inspect all gear and life support connections before leaving the ground. Continue inspecting your gear and life support connections during the climb. Inspect your gear after the climb.
7. Always remain tied in while in the tree.
8. Do not climb above your tie-in (see item 11).
9. If you perform a switchover from one tie-in to another, do not detach from the first tie-in until you have inspected your new attachment points (harness and tree) and fully loaded the second tie-in. That means vertical hang with your feet off the tree. The first tie-in is slacked just enough that you can fully load the second system.
10. Be aware that if you move horizontally out on a limb that a swing back to the trunk can generate force similar to falling to the ground.
11. Arborist semit-static and static climbing ropes and harnesses (that we generally use) are not designed to absorb a fall, they are rated for "work positioning". Do not climb in such a way that exposes you to a fall onto a slack rope. Always remove slack from the rope when you climb with your hands and feet on the tree.
12. Respect fatigue, your brain doesn't work very well when you are tired.
13. Stay hydrated in the tree, always carry water when you climb up into a tree, even in winter.

=====

Re:Basic Safety Protocol

Posted by oldtimer - 08/10/2008 08:00pm

Hey Moss, Thanks for keeping the board postings alive while I was gone! ;-) I met a guy that looks like you and has the same climbing style and philosophy about the trees, safety and similar ideas. It is weir to meet someone that looks and behaves so similar to someone else you know. The experience in venezuela was great, fun climbs and made a new friend. My Family is doing Ok under the circuntances (Mr Chaves destroying the country and all that) and to make you turn green with envy the price of gasoline is around 20 cents a gallon!. I was able to fill up the empty tank with around 2 dollars (4 bolivares)for around 15 gallons. Ouch!

=====

Re:Basic Safety Protocol

Posted by michaeljspraggon - 08/13/2008 08:39pm

I would add something about looking out for the safety of others (fellow climbers, passers by or wildlife), for example when throwing/firing shot bags up into the tree.

(A little off-topic but, regarding gasoline (petrol) prices, we in the UK are currently paying about \$11 per gallon and it's rising fast!!!)

Michael
