

Environmental SOP for Tree Trimming and Removal

Within MCAS Miramar

1) Background

Many trees planted on the Station are not regularly trimmed or have been planted in areas where they may obstruct necessary line of sight. Aside from providing aesthetic landscaping values, trees in developed areas provide shade and may support bird nesting. Native trees beyond developed areas can provide important natural habitat values that should be conserved. Conserving environmental resources while maintaining mission readiness throughout MCAS Miramar is a critical function of EMD.

2) Purpose

This document has been created to provide guidance to all persons tasked with trimming or removing trees within MCAS Miramar.

3) Application

This document applies to all personnel aboard Station performing tree trimming or removal including contractors.

4) References

- *MCAS Miramar Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan (INRMP)* - <https://www.miramar-ems.marines.mil/Divisions/Natural-Resources-Division/Natural-Resources/>
- *Migratory Bird Treaty Act* – (16 U.S.C. §§ 703–712) <https://www.fws.gov/birds/policies-and-regulations/laws-legislations/migratory-bird-treaty-act.php>
- *Federal Endangered Species Act* - <https://www.fws.gov/international/laws-treaties-agreements/us-conservation-laws/endangered-species-act.html>
- *MCO 5090.2 Environmental Compliance and Protection Program* - <https://www.marines.mil/News/Publications/MCPPEL/Electronic-Library-Display/Article/1552941/mco-50902/>
- *Miramar Base Exterior Architecture Plan (BEAP)*– Updated Plant List Appendix (2011) [contact the Station Botanist at 307-6426 or Public Works Asset Management Division]

5) Procedure

5.1 Bird Nest Check

A bird nest check must be conducted prior to trimming or removing any trees. Take extra precaution during nesting season, which runs from February 15th to September 1st. If a nest is found during nesting season, trimming or removal of the tree cannot be conducted until outside of the nesting season or if the nest is free of eggs and young.

5.2 Safety

Safety precautions include, but are not limited to, the following: Prior to conducting tree trimming or removal work, be sure to cordon off areas to avoid interfering with pedestrian and vehicle traffic. Ensure personnel conducting the work, wear appropriate PPE and ensure the safe and proper use of tools and equipment. Inspect area above and around the tree is free from any power lines and cables that may interfere with the work being conducted (see caution statement below). After work is completed, ensure proper clean up and disposal of trees and branches is conducted (see para. 5.3.5).

5.3 Tree Trimming

If the tree is to be trimmed, but not removed, determine what branches are to be trimmed and follow the guidance below.

5.3.1 Trimming Guidance

All trees trimmed with this guidance must be trimmed in a manner that will be aesthetically pleasing with the surrounding landscape. Tree canopies can be thinned by up to 25% to allow for more sunlight penetration (see picture below) and using tools and methods described below.



5.3.2 Tools and Methods

Branches small enough to be cut with hand pruners should be cut as close as possible to the next larger branch. Branches too large for pruners or loppers should be cut with a curved, pruning saw as close as possible to the next larger branch or trunk as possible (see picture below).

Carpentry tools, metal cutting tools, axes and other types of saw blades should be avoided as they are less efficient, increase the potential for injury and may leave unsightly scars on the tree.



If branches to be trimmed are too high to reach from the ground a pole with a similar curved blade and lopper attachment can be used (pole-saw). Branches must still be cut as close as possible to the next larger branch. See picture below of a pole-saw style tree trimmer.



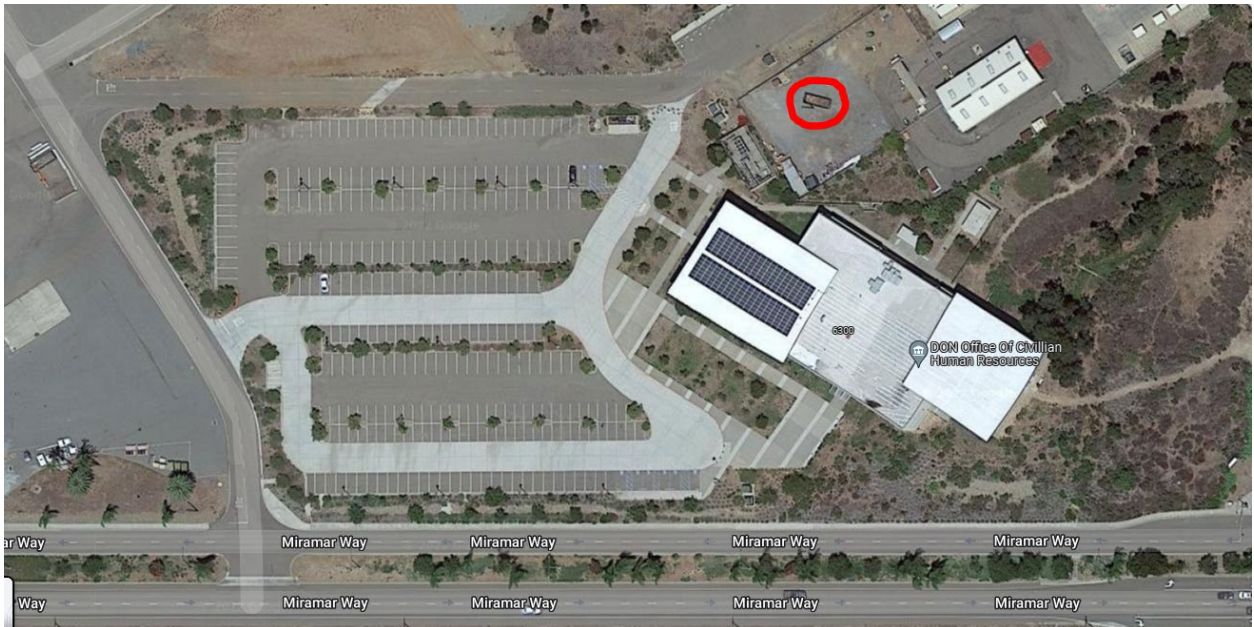
5.3.4 Post Trimming Treatment

Surfaces of cut limbs and trunks should be treated with wound sealer to prevent infestation of pathogens or harmful insects (see picture below).



5.3.5 Cleaning & Disposal

Leaves, limbs, branches and any associated debris left behind will dry and become a fire hazard. To prevent creating a potential fire danger, ensure all trimmings are collected, removed and properly disposed of. Trimmings must be disposed of using the green roll-off dumpsters located within MCAS Miramar. For exact location and access to the dumpsters (858)307-1097.



5.4 Tree Removal

If a tree has been identified for complete removal, you must first conduct a Bird Nest Check (para. 5.1) adhere to the Safety Precautions outlined in para 5.2, then follow the Tree Removal Guidance below.

5.4.1

To conduct a complete tree removal will likely present bigger challenges and may require the use of a chainsaw to cut the thicker, larger branches and trunk. Chainsaws may be available for check out at the MCCA Self-Help department bldg. 3322 phone 858-307-1097. Note: Chainsaws are dangerous, and should be operated by personnel with working knowledge of the equipment. Falling trees and limbs pose potential hazards that need to be observed (see Caution statements below).

Caution:

Chainsaw Hazards

Blades can cut you. Chainsaws are heavy and can cause a back injury. Noise* from the chainsaws can cause hearing loss. Chainsaws can kick back and cause an injury. Vibration from the chainsaw can cause numbness and injuries to your muscles, nerves, or tendons (sometimes called “ergonomic” injuries). Flying debris can cause an eye injury.

Caution:

Tree Removal Hazards

Observe extreme caution as falling trees and limbs can strike or crush a person causing serious injury or even death. Electrocutation hazard: falling trees and limbs can come in to contact with an electric power line potentially causing serious injury or death. Ensure area is free of power line dangers. When cutting large limbs, be alert for the chain binding and kicking back that can cause severe injuries. Keep a minimum of two tree lengths away from the feller and falling trees.

5.4.2 Cleaning & Mulching

All trimmings, woodchips or associated debris must be removed from the project area and properly disposed of at project completion. Green-waste can be disposed of at the Station’s designated green-waste dumpster (see section 5.3.5 for location).

All equipment shall be removed and properly stored at the end of each day’s work, and any borrowed equipment returned when the project is complete.

Woodchips produced from a tree removal may be used as mulch within developed areas of the Station. Woodchip deposited to a depth of at least 3” can greatly help reduce weed growth in the area they are deposited on. Woodchips should not be deposited on areas of decorative rock/cobble, areas where water is expected to flow or in undeveloped parts of the Station.

5.4.3

Whenever possible, trees removed should be replaced with a native tree species appropriate for the location for the location they are to be planted (Consult the *Base Exterior Architecture Plan* or contact the Station Botanist Ron Clark 307-6426). The replacement is not required to be in the same location as the tree that was removed, but should be done in a location that is accessible for care and maintenance (i. e. watering and trimming) and will not obstruct necessary line of sight.

Careful consideration should be made when selecting the type of tree that will be planted. Due to the shallow soil that exists in many parts of MCAS Miramar, any tree that grows to 15 feet or more in height is prone to wind-throw and is more likely to fall in high winds causing a potential hazard.