Accident Testimony

Jeff Justice

On the morning of Feb 24, 2021, Chad and I were working on the ground while Emelio was in one tree and José was getting ready to climb another tree. Jose then asked me to come and show him how to tie his rope to his carabiner. I tied it for him and continued with my tasks on the ground. We finished the first house, then another quick job at another house where no climbing took place. At the third and final house of the day I was assigned by Emelio to work on the canopy of the tree on the right side of the front yard, next to the street. Emelio was to work on the tree to the left of mine, while Chad and José both climbed the tree in the center of the yard. I grabbed two poles, a pole saw blade, and a lopper to go complete my work. Jose then borrowed my poles and blade to put his rope over a high branch in the tree so he could climb. Chad used the throw line and ball to get his rope into the same tree. I then took my poles and blade back and started performing my task. I was finishing up my trimming when I heard a thud come from the direction of the other crew members and heard someone shout about a fall. I then ran to the tree the climbers were in to see what had happened. I then saw José on the ground with his rope hanging from the lowest limb. We then tried talking to José to see if he was okay and after not responding for a moment, he opened his eyes and started moaning. Chad was still up in the tree and yelled to call 911, which I immediately did. I then grabbed the iPad so that I could get the address for the house we were at but I could not figure out how to see the information. I passed the iPad off to Emelio and asked him to see if he could find it. I then saw there was a street sign at the end of the street so I ran to it to get the address for the paramedics. I then described what had happened to the 911 operator and answered all questions she asked. During this call Chad had come down and was staying with José, making sure he didn’t move. While talking with the 911 operator Emelio and I made sure there would be a clear path for the paramedics. I then grabbed a hoodie out of the truck to place under his head because I saw that there was a thin metal border running through the yard that passed underneath his head. The paramedics showed up within approximately 5 minutes and removed his climbing saddle from his body before taking him to the hospital. The crew and I then stood by for instructions from our rep, Wes.