

## Adjustments in Lanyards

by Mike Stanonik



With the advancements in tree climbing equipment and safety techniques over the past several years, one tool that all climbers use has taken on a different role in our climbing operations. The lanyard (buck strap, flip line, or sissy strap) has been evolving in both its design and use. ANSI initiated a change in the use of the lanyard several years ago by requiring a second point of attachment when operating a chain saw in the tree. Due to a change in safety standards and equipment, the amount of use and the design of the lanyard have made big advancements. The lanyard has gone from a simple backup and now has become a full-fledged work positioning system.

When designing a safe and useful lanyard system, there are a few things to look for. First and most important must be the ease of adjustment. As you are working aloft in the tree, a good lanyard setup will allow you to make adjustments with one hand. This one-handed adjustment must include taking slack out of your system as well as allowing more rope into the system. Another item to consider is the amount of “sit back” there is with your adjuster. As you pull rope through the adjuster, whether it is a hitch or mechanical adjuster, there is a certain amount of slack that will return to the system before the adjuster will set, causing the climber to “sit back” away from the tree. For example, a Distel or Schwabisch hitch tied with longer legs or bridge will have more sit back than the same hitch tied with a shorter bridge. Whether you use a hitch or a mechanical adjuster, look for a setup with the least amount of setback possible. One last point that I’ve found to be especially important, can you release or slack the lanyard system when it is under

load? Although the mechanical cam ascenders work very smoothly for adjusting slack out of the system, many of them require pressure to be taken off the system before they can be released.

Once you are comfortable with these items, consider increasing the length of rope used in your lanyard. Ropes are becoming lighter, stronger and smaller in diameter. Before you decide to make the jump to a smaller-diameter rope make sure the hitch material or mechanical adjuster you plan on using is compatible with the rope. By increasing the amount of rope in your lanyard system it will allow you to use your lanyard as a second mini climbing line. Any time you can comfortably position yourself for a cut with a chain saw or be more secure while working a limb walk, you will become a safer and more efficient climber.

