

In California, a **Class B – General Building Contractor** license does **not** broadly authorize a contractor to run a standalone tree service or use heavy commercial tree equipment like chainsaws and chippers to prune, trim, or remove trees as their primary business.

According to the California Contractors State License Board ([CSLB](#)), the rules regarding what a Class B contractor can and cannot do are strictly enforced:

## The "Two Unrelated Trades" Rule

A Class B contractor's primary license is tied to structures built for the shelter/enclosure of people or property. They can only perform "other trades" (like specialized tree service) under specific conditions:

- **As part of a larger project:** If a Class B contractor is building a house or an addition, and tree removal is necessary to clear the footprint or complete the project, they can perform or oversee that tree work. However, the project *must* require at least **two unrelated building trades** (e.g., framing and roofing, or concrete and plumbing).
- **No standalone contracts:** A Class B contractor cannot legally take a contract that is *only* for tree trimming, tree removal, or brush clearing.

## The Correct Licenses for Tree Equipment & Services

If a company is operating primarily as a tree service—using commercial chainsaws, brush chippers, and stump grinders—they must hold one of the following specific licenses depending on the context:

1. **[C-49 – Tree and Palm Contractor License](#):** (This replaced the old C-61/D-49 Tree Service designation). This is the official specialty license required for anyone contracting to plant, maintain, prune, or remove trees and palms in California if the job is \$500 or more.
2. **C-27 – Landscaping Contractor License:** Allowed to use chainsaws and chippers to remove or trim trees *only* if it is part of a larger landscaping construction project.
3. **LTO (Licensed Timber Operator):** Issued by CAL FIRE, this is required if the tree cutting or removal is part of a commercial timber harvesting operation (where the wood is being sold or bartered).

## Summary

If a Class B general contractor is clearing trees on their own larger construction job site using a chainsaw or chipper, they are generally allowed to do so as part of the structural project scope. However, they **cannot** market themselves as a tree service or take standalone tree-trimming or removal jobs without holding a **C-49 license**. Doing so violates California license law.