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A consistent theme in the tree care industry is the need for trained tree care workers. Yet, while owners admit the need, they seem to hope that employees will show up at the shop after someone else has paid to train them. The best companies understand the productivity edge, the safety advantage, and the retention benefits of investing in training. The rest hope someone else will take care of it for them. The shortsighted can’t see beyond the cost of training and the immediate loss of revenue from pulling employees out of the field to sharpen their skills.

Here at TCIA, we created a Tree Care Academy to assist new employees in developing the skills they need to progress from tree care apprentice to ground operations specialist, tree climber specialist, aerial lift specialist and crew leader. We’ve written guides on identifying hazard trees, safe tree felling, and preventing electrocutions, struck-by’s and falls. We’ve offered best practices manuals for crane use and rigging, and now have a comprehensive illness & injury prevention program for companies.

Over time, we’ve learned that providing proven, peer-tested training programs is a good start—but it isn’t enough. The training also needs to be flexible, self-guided, offered locally and inexpensive. This year, we’re working to bring chipper operator safety and electrical hazards training to you … at a price you can afford … at a location you can get to easily.

After that, it’s up to you because training is only the first step. Compliance, every day in every way, will take effort on your part. It won’t come from a TCIA manual. That commitment will have to be developed internally. All too often, it isn’t. We’ve all seen tree crews on the job without even the most basic of personal protective equipment. Most days, employees manage to avoid serious injuries. And with cutbacks in government funding lowering the odds of an OSHA inspector visiting the jobsite, most days the company owner also manages to avoid serious consequences.

If one of those employees does have an accident, however, the entire dynamic changes. OSHA expects employers to be proactive by providing the protective equipment needed to prevent injuries, rather than waiting for an accident with severe consequence to occur. Even if you have never had an OSHA inspector on your jobsite, rest assured that if an employee has an accident that will change immediately.

The consequences of failing to comply can be severe, as a tree care company in Florida discovered last month. OSHA began an inspection after a worker suffered a serious cut to his thigh by a chain saw at a jobsite. After OSHA’s investigation, the company was cited for three “willful” violations for not providing protective leg coverings and eye or face shields to employees who operated chain saws, and not providing hard hats to employees working on the ground under trees. The company was also hit with two “serious” violations for failing to have a person adequately trained to provide first aid, making adequate first-aid supplies readily available in the workplace, and having a written plan designed to eliminate or minimize employee exposure to blood borne pathogens. The company had also not developed an emergency response or rescue plan for employees injured in trees, aerial lifts or other situations.

In total, OSHA proposed penalties of $153,600.

Company owners who think they can fly under the radar should realize that they are one chain saw cut away from a penalty that could very well put them out of business. The training exists, and it’s available at a cost that is much lower than the alternative. Perhaps you should think again about the cost of training and compliance before you send crews out for that next job.

Mark Garvin
Publisher
When a chipper feeds better, it makes life easier for the operator. The new RC1824 was given a powerful feed system to pull in brush, limbs, and logs easier and with less trimming. The massive 24” diameter top feed wheel is powered by a planetary drive motor and will easily climb over large logs without operator assistance. The 38” drum is the biggest in its class and smoothly chips through logs up to 18” in diameter. Power options provided by Cummins, with Tier III turbo-diesel engines available up to 160hp. Make things easy on yourself. To learn more contact your authorized RAYCO Dealer or visit our newly redesigned website at www.raycomfg.com.
Chain Saw Safety: Everyone’s Top Priority
By Rick Howland

Creating a Sustainable Landscape Successfully
By Jeff Shimonski

Vehicle Tracking, Telematics, GPS – What Is It Called and Which Should I Choose?
By Mike Moser

Cutting Fleet Costs: Alternative Fuels and Other Alternatives
By Kelli Angelone

Crane Use in Tree Care: Technology, Safety & Government Regulation
By Joe Birkbeck

The cost of training is cheaper than the alternative.
Washington in Review
By Peter Gerstenberger

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- Peter M.

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- Frank G.
By Rick Howland

The more one digs into chain saw safety, the more there is to know. Thankfuly, gone are early chain saw versions, essentially an engine with handles and a bar and chain running off the side. What we have today is a continuously evolving line of chain saws built for specific user categories, from the occasional homeowner user to the high-volume professional, with more and greater safety initiatives aggressively promulgated by chain saw manufacturers.

Some safety features are obvious, such as chain brake systems that, in the event of a kickback, will stop the chain virtually immediately. Plus, there is the simple but effective “chain catcher,” akin to a bracket designed to protect a user by preventing a “jumped chain” from whipping about. Other advancements, such as reduced weight, better balance and less vibration can be subtle, and it may take time for the benefits of these features to become obvious. Think reduced fatigue at the end of the day and, with that, reduced injuries over the course of the year or years.

Any way you cut it, today’s chain saws are built to be safer. But advancements do not stop here.

In the next generation of chain saws you can expect to find even less weight, for better handling. This also reduces the tiring effects of gyroscopic movement (think of it as torque movement) caused by the rotating masses of the engine and chain simply because the mass is reduced.

Then there is the next frontier to cross, and that is likely to be within months. Just think what battery-powered chain saws can do once the issues of weight and balance as well as quick and deep recharging are improved. Think of it: simpler motors, in favor of the more complex internal combustion engines, which are becoming increasingly problematic due to issues of fuel economy and emissions. Then there are the issues of cost and safety variables such as purchasing, storing and mixing fuel associated with traditional chain saw technology.

Mike Hudson, product training specialist for Echo Incorporated, says one of the safest things a user can do, especially in anticipation of weather events, such as the spate of tornadoes last spring or the recent hurricanes/tropical storms, is to “keep your chain saw ready and available and do not store fuel for long periods.”

“He warns that before starting to cut, test to see if the chain brake works. “This is a simple device which usually does not fail, but make sure. The instruction manual has information on how to test the chain brake functionality. If your saw offers choices, select a correct and safe chain for the job at hand,” Hudson says, noting that a chain-

The correct chain, matched to the bar and for the job, is a safer chain because it reduces kickback. Shown here is Echo’s CS-600P chain saw.
and-bar setup for occasional use has no place in a professional setting. “A correct chain (matched to the bar and for the job) is a safer chain because it reduces kickback. A chain brake protects the operator only after kickback. The best situation is to prevent it in the first place with the safest chain available,” Hudson says, “so match it to the safest bar you can.”

There are two reasons for buying OEM quality, he explains. “First, cheap saw chains typically do not stay as sharp as long. Second, inferior chain tends to “stretch” faster than quality chain. While that means more frequent adjustment, stretching is actually a sign of wear among the connecting chain link components. Of course, the chain can break or jump the bar and hit the operator.”

“The bar and chain choice is always a compromise when it comes to how to build a safer saw,” Hudson adds. “We want a safer chain that will not compromise cutting speed, yet they need to remain safe. Even the chains themselves are continually evolving,” he says.

“A basic rule of thumb for chain adjustment is to never let the chain hang from the bar, nor should it be so tight that it will not move freely. When checking a chain’s tension, wear gloves or use a rag to prevent your hand from slipping along the sharp chain teeth,” he advises.

Evolution-wise, Hudson says the number one driver in chain saw performance and safety is power to weight, that is, getting more power and less weight plus isolating or minimizing vibration. “Everything we build utilizes rubber or spring mounts to isolate the operator from the vibration of the engine, bar and chain.”

“We have a number of models that are new. One thing we talk about is lighter weight, for example, for the pro arborist the CS-271T. It is the lightest gas-powered chain saw in North America. That may not seem like a safety feature, but because it has tremendous power for its size, this top-handle trim saw is very maneuverable – with its 12-inch bar – and being easier to handle results in far less fatigue,” Hudson notes.

“We have a tip guard for Echo saws that goes over the nose of the guide bar, where the most serious kickback occurs. When in place, the tip virtually eliminates that,” he says, adding that the tip is especially important for amateurs.

Cary Shepherd, senior product specialist for Husqvarna, is quick to credit Husqvarna with the invention of the “inertia” chain brake, which senses the inertial force of a kickback to automatically shut down the chain operation. He also points out a new advancement called TrioBrake that is going on some Husqvarna saw models.

“In the event of a kickback, the left or leading hand should activate the familiar chain brake mechanically,” Shepherd says. “That has been around for many years. The brake also can be activated by inertia energy that results from kickback. If kickback occurs, the chain brake can activate by inertia before your hand activates it mechanically. The third and new part of the system is a mechanical lever on the back of the handle at the right hand.”

Activated in much the same way as the front, left-hand brake, the TrioBrake allows the chain brake to be engaged in one of three ways. First is intentionally, by simply lifting the right wrist (a potential body parts saver if you need to shut off the chain
while climbing), or passively, in the event of a violent kickback, in which the lifting action of the saw automatically causes the right hand – still on the handle – to contact and lift it into the chain brake position. (See photo, previous page.)

“Chain saws are made to be operated in one fashion – left hand on the forward handle and right hand on the rear handle,” according to Shepherd. “Left-handers sometimes hold them slightly differently with the hands reversed, and if the saw kicks, their right hand may not make sufficient contact with the leading brake lever. With TrioBrake, the chain brake can be activated with both hands as well as by inertia,” he adds.

“A key safety idea is to lighten internal components without creating structural deficiencies,” Shepherd notes. “Lighter material with high structural integrity results in a higher power-to-weight ratio and thus less fatigue and less injury. Lighter materials also contribute to less gyroscopic motion, so the operator is not fighting a twisting gyroscopic effect.”

He also cites other advancements, such as outboard clutch design bringing the bar and chain closer to the machine’s centerline for improved handling on limbing and bucking saws, increasing productivity and safety.”

“Ergonomics has a strong influence on all Husqvarna products,” he says. Even small things, such as offsetting the handle by 7 degrees, result in better positioning and handling and thus safer working conditions.

Shepherd points to other techniques as well, such as “raising the center of gravity and sweeping down the front handle. What this does is to shorten the distance between the handles and the center of gravity, which makes the saw easy to operate and reduces operator fatigue,” he says.

“Seldom talked about are high and low centers of gravity,” he continues. To illustrate how important they are, Shepherd suggests testing different saws – not running! “Hold with the right handle and put the nose on the ground, then take your left hand off the saw and note the amount of rotation due to how the mass is configured. It will roll more or less, depending on design,” he maintains. (Now, think of fighting that tendency as the saw is running and you can see how seemingly small contributions add up to major safety achievements.)

It should be noted that Husqvarna is an international company with many affiliated brands such as Jonsered and RedMax. Shepherd says that much of the technology found in its family of saw brands starts with Husqvarna.

Starting to show up in the market soon
will be the new T540XP top-handle saw for professional arborists. According to Shepherd, “This is one of our most advanced arborist saws featuring ergonomic design for safer climbing and work aloft, with a handle on top that allows easier movement in tight spaces, as well as extremely high chain speed.”

“This is a total redesign. It even looks different from other saws. One of the big deals about this saw is that it has auto-tune technology. There are no carburetor adjustments, rather a microprocessor that adjusts the saw for optimum operation regardless of temperature, fuel type, air filter condition or altitude,” Shepherd says. (Many years in development, Husqvarna will show this at TCI EXPO in Hartford in November and release it in early 2012.)

Steve Meriam, Stihl Inc. national sales manager, and Casey Kralovetz, product management support specialist, concur that saws have gotten safer over the years. Says Meriam, “Saws got lighter and more powerful over the years. As a result, they can be more dangerous, because light-and-powerful saws can give operators almost a false sense of security, especially with safety features such as a chain brake. So reading and understanding the instruction manual goes without saying, plus proper protective equipment is an absolute must.”

Meriam mentions what’s known as “white finger,” a numbing sensation resulting from nerve damage following long, continuous hours of cutting, especially in cool and damp environments. It used to be prevalent among professionals, loggers in particular, but new anti-vibration initiatives have greatly diminished that phenomenon.

Meriam and Kralovetz clicked off a series of small chain saw improvements leading to big safety gains, starting with the chain catcher, usually located below the sprocket cover, which severely limits a broken or derailed and flailing chain.

Featured on Stihl saws is a throttle control and interlock. “When carrying an idling saw through the woods it is recommended that the operator engage the chain brake. Some forget, especially those occasionally only cutting firewood. The interlock prevents a twig, for example, from activating the trigger because your right hand has to be wrapped around the rear handle of the saw to engage the throttle,” says Kralovetz.

“Old saws had a manual oil pump, which the operator continuously has to pressurize to feed oil to the bar and chain. New saws with automatic pumps save time and reduce one more step that can fatigue an operator,” Meriam adds.

The two discussed the importance of bar and chain systems. “Yellow is intended for professional use only, and green is designed to reduce the risk of kickback. Yellow is recommended only after specialized training in dealing with kickback. Green bars and chain are designed to help reduce kickback. They need to be used as a matched set,” Meriam stresses. (Pro chain, he explains helps speed up the job by allowing the chain to remain engaged with the wood and is more aggressive in cutting than green. The difference will be obvious to an experienced professional.)

He stresses, “It’s important to get input...
from a specialty dealer, especially a servicing dealer, someone who can counsel you as to the proper length of a bar, correctly matching the engine and bar length and the best type of bar and chain (yellow or green) for the typical application.”

“Stihl recommends saws under 62cc be sold with green bar and chain only. They are intended for consumer and farm use, except for the top-handle arborist saw. Green bar and chain for saws above 62ccs is an option, but matching the saw, the application and the user (casual vs. pro) is very important,” Meriam says.

Stihl has introduced chain saws with its Easy2Start system that uses less effort to start. Slowly pulling the starter cord pre-loads the recoil spring for a spring-assisted start on some models. Kralovetz also adds that there is another technique featuring a valve that slightly reduces engine compression on startup and closes automatically as the engine initially fires to bring it up to full compression.

Additionally, he says, “When you get into larger saws, cold weather can make for a harder start. We feature the Elastostart handle for professionals and loggers, which reduces strain to the operator’s arm and wrist.

Kralovetz says the new MS 201 T is shipping now, early actually, following a run on saws in that class in the aftermath of recent storms. This model is a 35cc, 2.1 hp, 8.4 pound (power head only, not bar and chain) unit with a recommended 14-inch guide bar (12- and 16-inch bars are optional).

“This saw is more fuel efficient and offers greatly reduced vibration and good ergonomics,” he says. “Improved air filtration means more time between maintenance. A harness ring allows the arborist to carry it on his or her belt when maneuvering through trees.”

There is a nifty and thoughtful feature, captured guide-bar nuts, which hold the sprocket cover on and thus the bar and chain. Captured bar nuts cannot be completely removed from the sprocket cover, so they can’t be lost in the snow or on the forest floor.

The two also point to things such as a side chain adjuster that makes it easier to perform this necessary and regular process, which is required during break-in and during ongoing use due to normal wear. Side adjusters are easier to get to and away from muffler and bumper spikes. “Another big feature in our saws is an adjustable shutter, which allows the carburetor to get pre-heated air in cold weather, meaning 45-50 degrees Fahrenheit or lower,” Kralovetz adds.

On certain models, Stihl offers an additional chain breaking feature designed to work with the right hand of the operator. According to Kralovetz, if the operator removes his hand from the rear handle of the saw, the chain brake engages.

Next time you pick up your saw or go shopping for a new one, consider that some of those features that may seem like creature comforts or overregulation are actually intended first and foremost to keep you SAFE.
On September 15, federal OSHA awarded $10.7 million in Susan Harwood Training Grants to 69 non-profit and community/faith-based groups, business and trade associations, labor unions, joint labor/management associations, colleges and universities. The purpose of these grant awards is to support the development or implementation of training to protect American workers.

Significantly, for the third time in its history the Tree Care Industry Association received a grant to conduct electrical hazards awareness training for tree workers around the country.

Almost all practicing arborists have some exposure to potentially harmful electricity and therefore require some level of training on how to avoid and/or deal with the hazard.

A recent report from the Centers for Disease Control underscores the significance of the electrical hazard. A total of 1,142 grounds maintenance workers (GMWs) were fatally injured at work during 2003–2008, an average of 190 each year.

The rate of fatalities for this group of workers was high as well: An average of 13.3 per 100,000 employed GMWs died each year, compared with a “baseline” rate of 4.0 fatalities per 100,000 U.S. workers.

The CDC report indicates that contact with overhead power lines caused 97, or eight percent, of the fatalities during the period studied.

In a struggling economy, new tree care companies emerge with increasing frequency; and existing companies that have formerly confined their activities to lawn maintenance and landscaping are now venturing into tree work without fully understanding the attendant risk.

The inherent physical demands and seasonality of tree and landscape maintenance contribute to a high employee turnover rate and a steady influx of unskilled, inexperienced workers. Job openings are often filled by at-risk worker populations such as immigrant (mostly Hispanic/Latino), minority and low literacy workers.

The CDC report asserts correctly that the frequently changing and mobile nature of this work makes it difficult to train crews effectively. Small business employers of GMWs often do not have the resources to employ occupational safety professionals, and their owners and supervisors often lack the knowledge, skills and resources to identify safety hazards and to develop safe work practices.

TCIA studies the anecdotal information contained in media accounts of occupational accidents. Our observation relative to the electrical hazard is that most fatal accidents involving electricity are due to grossly dangerous and non-compliant conditions that could be influenced dramatically, even with a minimal amount of training.

For example, in calendar year 2010, TCIA gathered information on 89 media accounts of fatal accidents during tree work. Fourteen of those involved electrocution. Only two of the 14 deceased workers were employed by a utility to perform line maintenance, and both of those were killed by contact with a hidden conductor. Ten of the remaining 12 decedents violated minimum approach distances and made electrical contact through conductive ladders, tools or tree branches.

The Susan Harwood Training Grant Program matches the tree care industry’s need very well. The program is intended to support in-person, hands-on training and educational programs for workers and employers in industries with high injury and fatality rates; workers who are young, have low literacy or limited English proficiency and/or are otherwise vulnerable; and small business employers.

“The programs funded by these grants are unique in providing hands-on training to workers in dangerous jobs. They will have a long-lasting, positive impact on workplace safety and health,” said Assistant Secretary of Labor for OSHA Dr. David Michaels.

Readers should watch in the coming months for announcements of grant-sponsored electrical hazards training workshops in their areas. Announcements will also be made on TCIA’s website, www.tcia.org.

For a list of 2011 Susan Harwood grant awards, visit www.osha.gov/dte/sharwood/grant_awards.html.

Peter Gerstenberger is senior advisor for safety, compliance & standards for the Tree Care Industry Association.
Landscape trees are at their peak value when they are thriving and providing our clients with beauty, shade and all the “ecosystem services” that make our communities better. Arborists services are often at their peak then, too. The highly skilled services needed to maintain trees are greatly valued and accrue over time. All this value usually ends when we make the final cut and fell urban and suburban trees. Debris becomes mulch. Trunks or boles become better mulch. And the market for mulch is solid, no doubt.

But might there be more value in our urban trees beyond mulch? There is growing interest in harvesting urban timber and potentially growing markets. Urban timber is that which is reclaimed from trees grown in cities, towns and even rural areas, and there are many qualities of urban wood that suit niche markets and the green building market.

First, landscape trees are much more diverse than traditional lumber species. Some low-quality trees make highly desirable lumber – such as box elder with pink hues and wood properties of maple. While clear lumber, free of marks, stains and insect damage appeals to the mass market, this “character wood” is of greater value to custom furniture makers and artisans. Ann Arbor, Michigan, built a stunning modern library featuring support beams made of ash logs marked with the distinct galleries of emerald ash borer.

Second, urban wood fits the needs of consumers who want sustainable products. Trees removed either to clear a lot for building or because they are at the end of their useful life can be reclaimed – a popular attribute for green building materials. Another attribute is the proximity of this timber to the end market. Urban timber advocates like to think of it as lumber with a zip code. Sustainability proponents define this as “buying local.” The U.S. Green Building Council recognizes materials procured within a 500 mile radius of a building that is striving to earn the prestigious LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) ranking.

Finally, urban wood can capture memories, sentiments and value of trees that were treasured over the course of their lives. And clients are willing to pay to transform their beloved trees into furniture and flooring that allows the trees to live on for generations. Customers inclined to invest in tree care and who value unique and meaningful arts and crafts may be
interested in services to convert logs into lumber and finally into one-of-a-kind household goods.

To enter the sustainability market with urban wood, tree care companies should alter their perspective to look for value in landscape trees. Tree removal processes will need to be adjusted to harvest valuable logs in longer lengths suitable for milling. Logs also need to be stored properly to protect wood quality until milling can be done in cost-effective batches. Skilled sawyers need to be sought out to provide milling and drying services for clients.

Urban wood fits the needs of consumers who want sustainable products. Trees removed either to clear a lot for building or because they are at the end of their useful life can be reclaimed – a popular attribute for green building materials.

In most cases, urban wood as a sustainable building material is relatively unknown. So arborists should seek opportunities to market urban wood to architects and developers known for building green. And arborists would do well to demonstrate the use of urban wood in their own homes and facilities.

There will always be mulch. Inferior logs and branches still find a useful end protecting other landscape plants and keeping weeds out of planting beds. But finding ways to harvest the best logs for lumber allows the tree care industry to be even greener; to better serve the needs of clients; and to find higher value in logs – beyond mulch.

Edith Makra Kusnierz is an ISA Certified Arborist and holds a BS in Forestry from the University of Illinois. She previously served as community trees advocate for the Morton Arboretum; urban forestry coordinator for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts; and as an aide to Mayor Daley helping to launch Chicago’s green initiatives. She led Illinois’ emerald ash borer readiness planning by convening a Planning Team of 28 stakeholder organizations beginning in 2003, prior to the state’s detection of EAB. Among the many positive results of this effort was the establishment of the Illinois EAB Wood Utilization Team, which trained and educated arborists and urban foresters about opportunities to reclaim valuable products from felled ash trees.

She will be speaking more in depth on this same subject at TCI EXPO 2011 in Hartford, Connecticut, in November. For information about EXPO or to register, visit wwwexpo.tcia.org.
Morbark names Jim Shoemaker president

Morbark, Inc. in August appointed James W. Shoemaker Jr. as president. Shoemaker replaces Lon Morey who will remain as the chairman of Morbark’s Board of Directors.

Prior to his appointment as president, Shoemaker served as Morbark’s vice president of operations and board member. He joined Morbark in 2003 as the manager of operations and has held numerous positions in the company. Prior to joining Morbark, Shoemaker spent 25 years with the Jervis B. Webb Co. managing operations, accounting and supply chain.

“We are fortunate to have a leader like Shoe, who can step up and move the company forward during this critical time,” said Lon Morey. “He not only has the extensive operations, accounting, and supply chain experience, which will be instrumental in our global expansion, but he also has extensive experience in change management.”

SavATree hires industry veteran Michael Galvin to consulting group

SavATree in September hired Michael Galvin as director of its Consulting Group. Galvin will be tasked with developing new relationships for SavATree’s Consulting Group, which is working on a number of high profile projects including one at Johns Hopkins University where the team created tree preservation controls for the construction of the state-of-the-art Brody Learning Commons.

Galvin comes to SavATree with a wealth of experience gained over the course of a 25-year career in arboriculture that includes 13 years with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. In this role he spear-headed programs to provide technical and financial assistance for urban forestry in the Chesapeake Bay region. During this time, Galvin was also instrumental in the assessment of the regions Urban Tree Canopy and setting goals for its future growth.

“I’ve spent most of my career saving trees so from the company name itself, to the quality of practice and approach to tree care, everything about SavATree aligns with my view of arboriculture. I’m very excited to be a member of this team.”

Galvin is a Registered Consulting Arborist and recipient of the 2011 True Professionals award from the ISA, recognizing his positive impact on the industry. He is also a co-principal investigator for the National Science Foundation’s Chesapeake Bay ULTRA-Ex grant, former co-principal investigator for the Baltimore Ecosystem Study and the author of dozens of publications on arboriculture and urban forestry nationwide.
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Three models in the John Deere Power Systems lineup of 75 hp to 174 hp off-highway diesel engines were certified in July 2011 as compliant with EPA Interim Tier 4, European Union (EU) Stage III B and California Air Resources Board (CARB) emissions regulations. These include the PowerTech PWX 4.5L and PVX 4.5L engines and the PowerTech PVX 6.8L model below 174 hp. In tree care, these engines might be used in chippers, mulchers, firewood processors, horizontal grinders or stump grinders. EPA Interim Tier 4 and EU Stage III B emissions regulations begin January 1, 2012, for these size engines and require a 90 percent reduction in diesel particulate matter (PM) and up to an approximate 30 percent reduction in nitrogen oxide (NOx) from previous Tier 3/Stage III A requirements. Deere achieved these by using cooled exhaust gas recirculation (EGR) for NOx control and an exhaust filter for reducing PM. These engines will feature full-authority electronic controls, a 4-valve cylinder head, a high-pressure fuel system, wastegate or variable geometry turbocharging and an air-to-air aftercooler system.

Earth & Turf Clamp-On Forks

Earth & Turf Products, LLC’s new economy, 800-pound capacity Clamp-On Forks are designed for use with many small compact tractor loaders. These small, but rugged clamp-on bucket forks give compact loaders additional versatility, and they are especially easy to install and to remove. No bucket alterations are necessary and they will not damage buckets, if properly installed. Tine length is 32 inches, and they weigh 70 pounds per pair, making shipment practical. The main upright is capped to keep out rain water; an extra-wide handle makes them easier to carry; and the finish is extremely durable powder coating for a long, attractive life. Manufactured in New Holland, Pennsylvania.

Rite in the Rain All-Weather Notebook

J.L. Darling Corporation’s Rite In The Rain all-weather writing paper, and particularly their pocket notebooks and copier paper, might be of interest to those having to write reports or take notes while in the field. Rite in the Rain is a patented, environmentally responsible, all-weather writing paper that sheds not only rain, as the name implies, but sweat, humidity and even the accidental trip through the washing machine. Rite in the Rain provides an effective means with which to write, protect and keep valuable information when working outdoors. Products include copier paper, field books, notebooks, loose leaf, grid sheets and all-weather pens. Custom printing is also available. RITR all-weather writing paper products are available from Forestry Suppliers, Ben Meadows and other arborist supply outlets.

DAYLube nano-ceramic grease

New DAYLube high performance grease from Dayton Progress Corp. in Dayton, Ohio, uses nanoceramic particles that act as sub-microscopic ball bearings to provide continuous lubrication to steel surfaces. Available in 1- and 5-gallon pails, DAYLube is designed for higher volume applications – especially off-road equipment such as loaders, excavators and other heavy equipment – for the protection of bearings, bushings, cables, cams, chains, gears, lifters, machine parts, robotics, slides, wear plates, etc. With a much lower coefficient of friction than traditional PTFE (polytetrafluoroethylene) greases at all temperatures, chemically inert DAYLube is also environmentally friendly. It maintains its viscosity across full temperature range and is NSF-H1 Food Grade Certified. DAYLube operates in temperature ranges from -40 F to 800 F, and the nanoceramic particles remain intact to 2500 F. It has high load-bearing properties, a low dielectric constant, does not contain metal or silicone and is resistant to steam, acids and most chemical products.

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October, 1, 2011
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Ellington Agricultural Center, Nashville, TN
Contact: www.urbanforestryconference.org; (615) 837-5436

October 2-5, 2011
PNW-ISA 2011 Annual Training Conference
Coeur d’Alene, ID
Contact: www.pnwisa.org

October 4, 2011
Diagnosing Urban Tree Decline: A Diagnostic Walkabout
Rochester Hills, MI
Contact: MGIA (248) 646-4992; www.landscape.org

October 5-7, 2011
2011 Texas Tree Conference & Trade Show*
Waco Convention Center, Waco, TX
Contact: www.isatexas.com

October 7, 2011
ISA Certified Arborist Examinations
Waco, TX
Contact: www.isa-arbor.com/certification/tests

October 12, 2011
ANSI Accredited Standards Committee Z133 Meeting
Embassy Suites BWI, Baltimore, MD
Contact: (217) 355-9411, x259; jhuber@isa-arbor.com

October 13, 2011
Outdoor Power Equipment Safety, Application &
Green Technology, Bingham Farms, MI
Contact: MGIA (248) 646-4992; www.landscape.org

October 19, 2011
Clean Fleet Technologies Conf.: Fueling the Choice
Humble Civic Center, Humble, TX
Contact: www.h-gac.com/go/CFTC

October 21-22, 2011
NJ Shade Tree Federation 86th Annual Meeting
Crowne Plaza, Cherry Hill, NJ
Contact: Donna Massa (732) 246-3210; www.njstf.org

October 22-25, 2011*
New England Chapter ISA Annual Conference
Maine Maritime Museum, Bath, ME
Contact: www.newenglandisa.org

October 22-26, 2011*
Illinois Arborist Assoc. Annual Conf. & Trade Show
Holiday Inn Select
Tinley Park, IL
Contact: www.illinoisarborist.org

November 1-2, 2011*
Certified Tree care Safety Professional (CTSP) Workshop
In conjunction with TCI EXPO
Hartford, CT
Contact: 1-800-733-2622; cspf@tcia.org; www.tcia.org

November 3-5, 2011*
TCI EXPO 2011
Preconference workshops Nov. 1-2
Hartford, CT
Contact: cyr@tcia.org; 1-800-733-2622; www.tcia.org

December 5-6, 2011
Certified Arborist Seminars and Exam
Fort Harrison NR Education Ctr, Indianapolis, IN
Contact: Lindsey Purcell www.indiana-arborist.org

January 3-6, 2012
Advanced Landscape Plant IPM PHC Short Course
Dept of Entomology, U-Maryland, College Park, MD
Contact: Avis Koeman (301) 405-3913
akoeman@umd.edu

January 4-6, 2011*
Northern Green Expo
Minneapolis, MN
www.northerngreenexpo.org; 1-888-886-6652

January 19, 2012*
CT Tree Protective Association Annual Meeting
Southington, CT
www.CTPA.org

January 24-25, 2012
2nd Annual NJ Plants Trade Show & Conference
New Jersey Convention Center, Edison, NJ
Contact: NNLA. 1-800-332-3976; www.njplantshow.com

January 24-26, 2012
2012 Annual Indiana Arborist Association Conf.
Marriott Inn, Indianapolis, IN
Contact: Lindsey Purcell www.indiana-arborist.org

January 29-31, 2012
Wisconsin Arborist Association Trade Show/Conf.
Hotel Sierra & Kl Convention Center, Green Bay, WI
Contact: Jeffrey Boeder (414) 286-8660, waa-isa.org
Jeffrey.boeder@milwaukee.gov

January 30-February 2, 2012
Mid-Atlantic Horticulture Short Course
Marriott at City Center, Newport News, VA
Contact: www.mahsc.org; (757) 523-4734

February 1-3, 2012*
New England Growers 2012
Boston Convention & Exhibition Center, Boston, MA
www.NewEnglandGrowers.org

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GO ANYWHERE, SET UP ANYWHERE.
ALL UNITS TOWABLE BEHIND PICK-UP TRUCKS
By Robert Rouse

Insurance coverage is a necessary part of overhead for every legitimate business. What to buy, how much to buy and who to buy from are only a few of the factors to consider.

This article highlights some of the things tree care companies should consider when purchasing insurance. It will also help you develop a good working relationship with your agent. Just as you prefer to work with well-informed clients, your agent will appreciate your understanding of insurance.

Remember, your agent works for you, through fees and commissions paid based on your insurance premium. You are a valued client and your agent will be more than happy to discuss any of the items addressed in this article with you.

**General Liability**

Liability polices can differ greatly when it comes to coverage. Here are some things for a tree care professional to consider.

**Do I have adequate limits of liability protection?**

On average, a tree care company should carry a bare minimum of $1 million per occurrence and $2 million aggregate policy limits. The TCIA Accreditation standard asks that your insurance company have an AM Best-rating (www.ambest.com) of B++ or better with a minimum financial size VIII.

**Occurrence Form coverage**

Verify that your liability policy is on “Occurrence Form” coverage vs. less advantageous “Claims Made” form. “Claims Made” policy forms can result in significant coverage gaps if you cancel coverage, or change to an alternative insurer.

**Does my policy include “Professional” Liability?**

Tree care professionals often assume liability exposures similar to those found with other professions, as many offer consulting type services to their clients. A tree care professional’s liability policy is not complete without this relatively inexpensive coverage. Visit TCIA’s website to learn more about errors and omissions coverage: [www.tcia.org/insurance/ArborMax_ErrorsAndOmissions.htm](http://www.tcia.org/insurance/ArborMax_ErrorsAndOmissions.htm)

**Does my policy include pesticide and herbicide applicator coverage?**

This coverage is extremely inexpensive and should be purchased by virtually all tree care professionals for obvious reasons.

**Per Project Aggregate.**

The “aggregate” limit stated in the policy means that once that limit is exhausted due to one or a number of claims, then the policy has “used up” all of its coverage for the remainder of the policy period. By changing the policy condition to a “Per Project” Aggregate one can avoid this rare but potentially devastating coverage short-fall.

**Blanket Additional Insured for ongoing and completed operations.**

More and more commercial/business clients are requiring, often by contract, that they be additionally insured on the policies of those who they hire or sub-contract with. By adding this condition one can better their chances of being in compliance from an insurance standpoint when entering into contracts with clients.

**Limited Pollution Liability coverage.**

All liability policies contain some form of pollution exclusion in their coverage: however in some cases limited amounts of this coverage may be available. Remember that all tree care professionals have some pollution exposure.

Suggested minimum liability limits to purchase: At least $1 million per occurrence/$2 million aggregate.

**Workers’ Compensation**

**Does my tree care company have a Workers’ Compensation policy?**

It is surprising that many tree care companies do not have this coverage in place. It is important to remember that in many situations Workers’ Compensation is required by law, and failure to have the coverage can result in serious fines and
penalties, not to mention uncovered claims.

**Is my Workers’ Compensation policy written correctly to properly address the services and operations that I perform?**

As we all know, many tree care professionals offer a wide variety of services that involve different types of activities. Services such as general tree care, landscaping and lawn and landscape maintenance often have different WC codes and rates (depending on your state rules). It is important that your Workers’ Compensation policy properly reflect all of the proper work classifications as failure to do so can result in unexpected cost increases, or in some cases, over payment of premium. Visit the TCIA website for a general review of some commonly used codes (actual codes are variable from state to state): www.tcia.org/public/WC-Codes.htm

**Suggested Workers’ Compensation insurance purchase**

Workers’ compensation is required by law in all states. Anyone who has employees MUST purchase workers’ compensation insurance.

Suggested workers’ comp purchase for individual sole proprietors, & LLC’s: Many states allow owners of these entity types to “opt in” for coverage. We suggest that ALL owners opt in for coverage.

**Tools & Equipment coverage**

**Are my tools and equipment properly insured?**

Since tree care professionals operate a wide variety of equipment (other than vehicles) that they may own, lease or borrow from others, it is of extreme importance that you make sure that all equipment is properly insured. This is done with an Equipment policy. Generally speaking, these policies tend to have flexibility in how you insure equipment so it is advisable that you review this with your insurance professional regularly to make sure all equipment is properly insured.

Suggested Equipment Insurance limits to purchase: At minimum, insure all large pieces of equipment and any equipment for which there is a third party interest such as lien holders. It also may be important to insure any equipment that you rent, lease or borrow from others.

**Should I have an Excess (Umbrella) Liability Policy?**

Understanding that tree care operations pose extremely high risk, one should consider the option of adding this coverage as it allows one to drastically increase their liability protection above and beyond the maximum allowable limits on their General Liability, Auto Liability and, when

**Business Auto coverage**

**Are my vehicles properly insured?**

It is of extreme importance that you periodically check to make sure that all of your vehicles are properly insured and are covered correctly on your business auto policy. Often times tree care professionals bring business vehicles in and out of service for various reasons. Whenever possible it is preferable for your vehicle coverage to be based on “any auto” to avoid coverage gaps when vehicles are moved in and out of service.

Suggested auto insurance limits to purchase: Suggest minimum liability limits of $1 million per occurrence, physical damage coverage, hired & non owned auto liability limits of $1 million and “Symbol 1” coverage – any auto.

**Here is a checklist of items to review with your agent:**

**General Liability**
- Min. limit: $1 million per occurrence
- Occurrence Form
- Per project aggregate
- Arborist and landscapers professional services (errors & omissions) liability at policy limits, that include coverage for consulting
- Pesticide & herbicide applicator coverage
- Coverage for incidental operations (check for exclusions)

**Commercial Automobile**
- Same/concurrent limits as general liability
- Are special use vehicles properly described and insured to value?
- Are there restrictions on incidental operations? Example: snow plowing

**Workers’ Compensation**
- Are all exemptions (for sole proprietors, partners and corporate officers) properly documented as either opted in or out?

**Inland Marine**
- Is all mobile equipment properly scheduled and current?
- Are major tools and equipment properly scheduled and current?
- Are cranes exempted from “boom exclusions” for incidental operations? Note: Crane rental contracts often require boom overload coverage in the small print.
- Is there adequate blanket coverage for miscellaneous tools and equipment?

**Umbrella**
- Are there adequate limits in force ($1 million-$5 million)?

**Property**
- Is all real and personal property insured to proper value?
applicable, employer’s liability assumed under Workers’ Compensation. This coverage can be purchased in million dollar increments.

Minimum limits to purchase: $1 million per occurrence/$1 million aggregate.

Should I consider adding Employment Practices Liability (EPLI) coverage?

Lawsuits against employers from wrongful termination, age discrimination, sexual harassment and a host of other employment related allegations are on the rise. Not long ago, lawsuits of this nature were more common in large employer company environments, but recently claims of this nature have started to increase with smaller employers, including many tree care companies. This coverage is readily available from a large group of insurers and continues to be affordable even in light of the increased claims activity.

Minimum limits to purchase: $1 million per occurrence/$1 million aggregate.

Do I have adequate insurance on my property other than my equipment & tools?

All tree care companies have some form of office from which they run their business. In some cases this is just a small in home office, but in others it may be a separate structure on a residence premises, or they may lease or own property at another location. It is important to make sure that all property, office contents, buildings and so on be properly and adequately insured on some form of property insurance policy.

Proper limits to purchase: Replacement cost limits on all buildings and contents.

Other Important Considerations

Does your insurance carrier have specialty in the tree care industry?

Many insurers will offer a varied number of insurance policy products to tree care professionals, however some have more specialized coverage and industry knowledge than others. Some insurers may also be endorsed by one or more tree care industry associations. For example, TCIA endorses the ArborMAX insurance program because of the ArborMAX team knowledge of our industry and the unique product they offer, designed specifically for our industry. You should ask your agent if they have access to these specialized insurers.

Some specialized insurers not only offer specific coverage addressing the unique exposures of tree care operations, but also offer added services such as risk management and loss control services, and perhaps added safety training as well. For example, the TCIA Foundation (TCIAF) runs the loss control program for the ArborMAX insurance program. This allows TCIAF to place tree care industry experts at companies for on-site reviews. The experts make suggestions for improvement that can help the company avoid losses, resulting in lower premiums.

Is my agent knowledgeable about the tree care industry?

One should ask their agent if they have special knowledge and background on the tree care industry. Do they insure other tree care companies in your area? Are they members of any of the various tree care associations such as TCIA, and/or perhaps other local organizations? Are they partnered with insurers who specialize in the tree care industry?

Price

With the cost of insurance being the tree care company owner’s second largest expense in many situations, cost of insurance can easily become the sole motivating factor in one’s decision regarding who to place their insurance with. As a general rule, if one partners with an insurance professional who has specialty in, and commitment to, working in the tree care industry, in most cases pricing concerns can be removed from the equation.

Insurance professionals with specific knowledge of the industry can properly assess your insurance needs and exposures, and also point out potentially weak areas in your operations that may be having an adverse effect on insurance coverage and costs. By focusing on these areas the insurance professional can place your coverage with the most appropriate insurer while setting a plan in motion to control your insurance costs and keep them at their minimum, while maintaining adequate coverage.

Robert Rouse is vice president of industry standards and credentialing for the Tree Care Industry Association.

This article is intended only as information and does not/cannot address all insurance issues and coverage you may need for your business. Only you and an insurance professional can determine that after a specific needs analysis is completed for your company.
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You can’t pick up a paper or magazine and not read an article about sustainability, going green, organics, recycling, climate change, carbon footprint, etc. As members of the tree care industry, are we not part of the “Green Industry”? Are we not as green as it gets?

At my West Coast workplace in Portland, Oregon, we are in the epicenter of the green sustainability movement. We are constantly being measured by a growing percentage of both potential and existing clients on how green we are, which is influencing their buying decisions. While this may not be true for other markets across North America, it is a way of life here. Our company has taken notice of this business reality as well as our own environmental philosophy, and we are implementing a number of initiatives to become a greener more sustainable tree care business. Corporate America has definitely stood up and taken notice, with corporate heavyweights such as Wal-Mart and Home Depot implementing sustainable practices and selling green products.

Type “green company” or “green business” into Google and what are your results? Surprise – you don’t get a tree care, landscaping or nursery business. It seems that “The Green Industry” is losing its claim to being green and supplanted by companies selling green products or services such as green roofs, green cars, green energy. Our green image is fading as other industries take a leadership role in the “green movement” and change the meaning of green.

The green sustainability movement does not appear to be a passing fad; it is here to stay. We can get on board the sustainability train and be part of the journey or we can just stay in the station and have it pass us by. I believe every industry, including the tree care industry, will need to make the shift to a new sustainable paradigm in order to prosper or even survive as a business in the near future.

What does it mean to be green or sustainable? There is not one agreed upon definition but rather a number of vague and somewhat confusing principles. Being green is best described as a way of thinking, that every action we do shall do no wrong or diminish the Earth’s resources for future generations.

Another way to look at being a green tree care company is to look at the triple bottom line (TBL), also known as “People, Planet and Profit.” This is a new way for measuring business success and the goal of sustainability.
“People” (human capital) pertains to providing a living wage for employees, keeping workers safe and giving back to the community. Our company sponsors a community tree planting with Friends of Trees, a local non-profit group.

“Planet” (natural capital) refers to sustainable environmental practices. A TBL company strives to reduce its ecological footprint by reducing its energy consumption and use of non-renewable products, reduces waste and recycles. It improves the environment by planting, nurturing and maintaining trees and whole landscapes as an integrated ecosystem.

“Profit” (financial capital) is not to be confused with just traditional accounting profit. But it needs to be recognized that to be sustainable a company must make a profit to survive and continue to provide benefit for the long term. Profit is also seen as the real economic impact the TBL business has on the community as well as its social and environmental impact. A green sustainable tree care company in the course of maintaining trees and plants as a business can be financially profitable, ecologically sustainable and socially beneficial.

The tree care industry will need to redefine what sustainability is, or risk having it defined for us. We need to begin to look critically at opportunities for changing traditional practices and replacing them with environmentally friendly and sustainable business practices. A local Oregon winery has announced that their sustainability goal is to become carbon-neutral in 10 years. They installed a solar system that generates electricity, used green building principles in their building design and are a certified organic vineyard. Becoming sustainable can’t be done in one fell swoop but rather it is a journey that may take years to complete.

So what does a green sustainable arborist do? The green arborist checklist (next page) is a good way to self evaluate where you are on the road to sustainability. A green arborist might plant trees on south sides of buildings to reduce air conditioning costs and sequester carbon dioxide, practice IPM to reduce pesticide use and/or use organic products. We might recycle office paper, cardboard, metal, bottles and, of course, all of our wood debris. Our local utility company allows us a choice to buy “green” power from renewable energy sources to power our homes and businesses. I have visited several tree care companies that use wood boilers to heat their shops.

Here at Collier Arbor Care we replaced four gas-guzzling pickups used by sales staff with 40-plus mpg diesel cars (with really cool tree graphics) that run on biodiesel. All of our roof and parking lot runoff is filtered by a bioswale instead of being sent to a traditional stormwater system. We recently won an award for recycling our paper, cardboard and waste materials. We now use an organic vegetable oil for our chainsaw oil.

Collier Arbor Care Industrial Park has been chosen to participate in an international pilot program testing the nation’s rating system for green landscape design, construction and maintenance. Our four-acre industrial site landscape has the following features; a bioswale, tree arboretum, eco-lawn and a riparian ecosystem restoration. We were selected as one of 175 other pilot projects from 34 states and countries. The Pilot program is designed to
evaluate the new national uniform Sustainable Sites Initiative (SITES) rating system for sustainable landscapes. The SITES system has been devised to provide a road map leading to LEED certification for an overall site, expanding the Green building rating systems beyond the buildings’ skins.

Our landscape is mulched with arborist chips, maintained with an all organic Plant Health Care and Soil Health Care programs. We even mow our eco-lawn (which only needs 50 percent of the normal mowing, watering and fertilizing) with a battery powered lawn mower recharged by our solar panels.

Can we do more as a company to be sustainable? Of course! We have a strategic initiative at our company to become greener, use more organic products and reduce our footprint on this earth. Our business has either implemented or we are in process to put into practice most all of the items on the Green Arborist checklist. As Kermit the frog said, “It isn’t easy being green.”

The change to being more sustainable won’t be easy and it may cost more in the short run to implement. It will also take time and we will never be finished. The payback will be that it is better for the planet and our clients will appreciate and choose us over other non-green companies. Please join in the journey to make our industry more sustainable and keep our “Green” image.

Terrill Collier is president of Collier Arbor Care in Clackamas, Oregon, a Board Certified Master Arborist with a bachelor’s degree in entomology, and a former chair of TCIA’s Board of Directors.

He will be speaking on this same subject at TCI EXPO 2011 in Hartford, Connecticut, in November. For more information about TCI EXPO or to register, visit www.expo.tcia.org.
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Integrated pest management (IPM) is a concept that has been around for decades. I started looking into the practical applications of this concept in the 1980s when I began to notice that pesticide efficacy and insect resistance to those chemicals was a real and ongoing problem. I had already been working at Parrot Jungle, a privately owned zoological theme park in Miami, Florida, for about 10 years as a horticulturist, using the many current and available horticultural chemicals that had been on the market for years. The issues with chemicals and insect resistance were obvious and I felt other methods could be used to grow healthy plants.

I began to experiment with various cultivation techniques on individual groups or species of plants, seeking better control of irrigation and learning about compost production and the benefits of using finished compost on the plants I was trying to grow. I had some success in reducing chemical usage on plants without loss of plant quality. I also began a licensed composting facility and started using the finished product as a soil topdressing or a potting medium. The results were promising.

Hurricane Andrew in 1992 destroyed most of the grounds at the park. Almost all of our large mature trees had broken up or succumbed to windthrow. This included native live oaks, pond apple and bald cypress. Many mature exotic specimen trees and palms also came down. With an experienced rigging crew, I began to get those trees that had intact trunks, branch structures and a root system still fairly intact stood back up, cabled and sometimes bolted together. We did not use any fungicides on these trees; we only used finished compost to fill in holes in the rootballs and to top-dress those rootballs. I had previously heard about the possible fungicidal properties of compost and thought this would be a good time to test it out. We had great results and many of those trees are still standing and thriving today.

By the 1990s I had come to view the concepts of IPM and sustainability as one general concept that includes sensible horticultural practices that promote...
cultural techniques over the use of chemicals and, very importantly, cost effectiveness. Indeed the bottom line is something everyone has to accommodate. It does not matter if the financing is municipal or private, it is still the driver of the project and, since landscaping or the urban forest are not often viewed as a necessity, these budgets often get cut.

I was able to put my concepts to the test when a new 18-acre park was to be built from a bare site. I would be responsible for the plant selection, installation and ongoing maintenance of that site’s landscape including the challenge of creating a mature tree canopy as rapidly as possible. I had previous experience relocating large mature trees and palms but not on this scale.

The site was an 86-acre spoil island that had been created when the ship channels for the port of Miami had been dug during the 1900s. There were 150 trees and palms on the site that were mostly in fair condition considering the substrate consisted of limestone sand and crushed lime rock.

The developer wanted to demolish the trees because it was seen as being cost effective. I was eventually able to convince the owners that these mature trees were an asset and that it would be more cost effective to relocate them during the construction process. I selected out the trees in poor condition and the local municipal environmental department required me to remove any invasive exotics. This left 80 trees and palms, which were soon moved to an off-site holding area and then brought back and planted as the construction schedule allowed. This took two years. About 30 other mature trees and palms were brought in and planted from other locations.

I also planned to develop and maintain the landscaping on this new site in a sustainable manner – no pesticides, fungicides or commercial fertilizers. What was used in the large tree relocation was 800 tons of finished compost that I had brought over from the original composting site. This along with thousands of yards of tree chipping material was used as topdressing on the rootballs of these trees. I had been using the mixed material (both wood chips and green leafy material) that comes off the back of chipper truck for mulch since the 1970s with very good results. As long as I let the mulch go through a thermophilic stage and begin to break down before it was used in the landscape, I would have no problems.

When the trees were first moved into the off-site holding area their rootballs were immediately top-dressed with several inches of well decomposed tree chipping mulch. My purpose was to protect the roots from drying out as well as to possibly inoculate the rootballs with beneficial organisms. Much to my pleasant surprise, many of the trees soon filled the composted layer with fine hair roots. When the trees were eventually planted in their final location, I first had them top-dressed with three to four inches of the finished compost and over that a few inches of the decomposing tree chipping mulch.

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**Oak moving at Watson Island. We are moving out a live oak to make room for construction in 1999. This tree has since more than doubled its DBH.**

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**Ficus religiosa, or Bo-tree. Since many species of ficus are shallow rooted and tend to fall over in hurricanes, the author has started supporting these trees with telephone poles and growing aerial roots down them. There is a pole in the back of this tree that is completely covered with roots and the pole is no longer visible. The roots eventually coalesce and form a solid trunk. Photo by Sachin Mohan.**
I supervised the relocation of every tree. One of the most striking observations that I made was the fact that the soil seemed inert. I did not see a single earthworm or any other organism that would indicate that there was any kind of soil food web in this substrate. The original geotechnical information indicated that there were areas onsite that contained five to 10 percent organic material. I only found a very thin layer of organic material occasionally on the surface. With the root balls measuring up to 20 feet in diameter and 6 to 8 feet in depth, I was able to get a good look at what this island was made of.

The mature tree relocation and landscaping was completed but the compaction issues that the landscaping would have to deal with would be critical to the health of all plants. Much of the landscaping had to be planted into compacted structural fill. This I hoped to correct eventually by the constant top dressing of the ground with compost and well decomposed tree chipping mulch. The biological activity would eventually create an uncompacted organic layer that tree roots could exploit for nutrients and moisture.

I also took note of green mulch plant species that farmers in many tropical countries utilize to create a green manure to fertilize their crops. One of the species that I utilized extensively in establishing the landscape was *Tithonia diversifolia*. This fast growing, short lived shrub has attractive flowers but most of all creates a biomass that, when used as a green manure, supplies N-P-K to target plants. The root system also helped to decompress the soil that it was grown upon.

Now, 10 years later, all of the trees have thrived. I recently measured the DBH of the two live oaks (*Quercus virginiana*).
along with a number of other tree species that were relocated and have found they have more than doubled in width and their canopies are thriving. There has been some canopy loss due to strap compression on certain species of trees and some that had been damaged by lightning strikes.

The organic layer now extends downward two to three feet and is full of earthworms. This is a good sign that the soil is healthy as the earthworms will aid in the aeration and further decompaction of the soil.

I am now finding many species of fungi growing in the mulch beneath the trees and landscape that has been replenished on a regular basis for the past 10 years. I have started a photographic database as I have been getting these fungi and their ecology identified. Many of the species are identified as saprophytes but some are also known mycorrhizal fungi.

This landscape project has been a success from several points of view. This was (and still is) a very cost effective project utilizing no pesticides, fungicides, commercial soil additives or commercial fertilizers. The landscape has successfully dealt with a number of outbreaks of newly introduced insects over the past several years. The lack of pesticide use has enabled beneficial insects that will eventually control any plant pathogenic insects to become established in the landscape. This is true sustainable landscape.

Jeff Shimonski is an ISA Certified Municipal Arborist, a member of the American Society of Consulting Arborists, vice president of horticulture at Jungle Island in Miami, Florida, and runs a consulting company, Tropical Designs of Florida.

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Sachin Mohan, left, TCIA’s vice president of corporate relations & marketing, visits with the author, Jeff Shimonski, at Parrot Jungle in Miami in August.

The author found this gilled bolete mushroom, Phylloporus rhodoxanthus, growing in the mulch underneath the Jungle Island trees. It is a mycorrhizal fungus.
By Mike Moser

Many simply call it GPS, others refer to it as a “vehicle tracking system,” and then there is “telematics,” which is gaining popularity. For this writing I’ll call it telematics, because, well, I like how it sounds.

I am referring to a “black box” mounted in a vehicle (or off-road equipment) with an antenna to receive global positioning satellite (GPS) location data, and sometimes also connected to the vehicle’s engine control computer. What I am not talking about is the turn-by-turn direction tool most of us can no longer travel without.

Vehicle telematics technology has been around for years, initially introduced in over-the-road trucks where the return on investment (ROI) was positive, even at the initial high cost. It became popular with other industries, as with most new technologies, when the cost became affordable for the masses. I believe the cost has now bottomed out or is very close to it. It is affordable, with a positive ROI for most businesses using vehicles to provide a service for their customers.

Many think of telematics as a tool to operate vehicles more efficiently, and it is. But the technology available today is much more than that. It is a tool that will help run your whole organization more efficiently, safer and with more transparency. It can improve field operations, customer service, administrative processes, communication, regulatory compliance, utilization, vehicle routing and, of course, fuel consumption.

The tree care industry is just getting under way with the use of telematics and still figuring out how to best use the tool. A couple of years ago, very few utilized the technology, and today most of the utility line clearance contractors have implemented it. Why? For some, their customers are either requesting or requiring it. Others are looking to reduce operating expenses, and have anticipated a positive return on their investment. But, we all know anticipating a ROI and actually achieving it are two different things.

The size of a fleet can affect the amount of benefit a company receives. Not because of the cost of the system, but because larger fleets generally have a healthier ability to utilize technology. Also, for a supervisor who cannot be on each job all day, this tool allows him or her to know what adjustments need to be made to be more effective. A virtual manager of sorts.

As with any technology, you need to use it to receive the benefits. You cannot install it and think you will see results without making substantial changes within your organization – changes in the performance indicators you use, information you share, numbers to be accountable for and, yes, there will be much more transparency. At some level, it will change the way employees are managed. These changes will be necessary to stay one step ahead of your competition, trust me. Imagine trying to compete today without your employees having cell phones. Telematics is the next mainstream technology to enter the tree care industry, and it is happening in a hurry.

Is it for everyone? Hmm, do we all have cell phones? I suppose a small operation with a couple of vehicles should have a good handle on what is happening on a day-to-day basis, and may not realize the value or have the resources to manage the electronic information. But, most companies larger than that should receive some value. Automated alerts and the ability to push reports to email make monitoring pretty easy, and most systems have these capabilities. If monitoring driving habits alone (to promote on-road safety) elimi-
nates one vehicle accident, think of the savings you would realize.

You will need to do some preparation long before you fully understand your ROI potential, let alone choose a product or supplier. Assembling a project team and involving all departments within your organization is essential to identifying all potential opportunities to include in your ROI analysis. If two heads are better than one, six or seven are even better. As much as we think we know what everyone else does, we really don’t.

So, assemble a strong project team who will remain engaged, and choose those who tend to be open minded and willing to accept change. There will be plenty of change. Many of the efficiencies are gained by integrating the data you will receive into your other electronic systems, so a high level of technical expertise on the team is important. In addition to your project manager, the project team may include representation from; IT, Fleet, Risk Management, Operations, Purchasing, Corporate Administration, Finance, end user(s), customer(s) and, if possible, a senior manager. Without senior management support, the project is destined to fail, so be sure you have full support throughout the project. And communicating your progress and successes along the way always helps.

A structured process should be followed to identify the needs (of each department) and potential improvement opportunities. Your company’s strategic plan should also be considered. This will create, in essence, a wish list of features and functions. The next step is to quantify the ROI of each function and prioritize them. Remember, it isn’t always about the dollars saved. Safety improvements, for example, which are difficult to quantify, should move some functions toward the top of your list.

You will then need to understand the telematics industry and identify the currently available features, data transfer options, data integration potential and approximate costs by talking with suppliers and organizations using this technology. Understanding emerging technologies, potential future regulations (e.g. electronic log books) and the ability to update to avoid premature obsolescence is also important.

There are many cost saving opportunities to be considered. Identify the alerts that would bring value: driving after hours, engine overheating, engine codes and driving with the PTO on are just a few. Determine which manual administrative processes can be eliminated or completed more efficiently by importing data from the telematics system, rather than entering manually. Examples are odometer/hour meter readings, state miles for IFTA reporting and timecard/payroll hours. Also, determine how driving pattern data should be reported to benefit your safety program.

Once you have your list of needs (to achieve ROI) and wants (the other “nice to have” features), prepare your request for proposal (RFP). Sometimes a simple RFP is best. This is not one of those times. This is a large investment of time and resources, and there is much to include. I suggest...
including very specific, but realistic requirements such as: project timelines, hosting, data source (OBDII, J1939, PTO, seat belt use, other inputs/outputs), power management, internal and third party integration, reporting and performance indicator data, hierarchy structure, training users, accident data, alerts (what/when/how), how will installation and updates be handled, custom development responsibilities and costs, service and warranties, expandability and post installation management.

It would also be beneficial to request information to determine the strength of the supplier. Some examples are management team bio’s and tenure, company financials, available resources and plan for current and future development, number of customers and units being managed and, of course, a number of references. This process should quickly identify who can and cannot provide what you need and who may or may not be around in a few years to provide service support and updates. With the increasing demand for this technology, there are a large number of start-up companies. You should know if you are partnering with someone working out of their garage.

Once the team narrows the choices to two or three (two is better), performing a pilot test to verify the system performance is important. Often, your idea of how a feature will function and a sales person’s explanation are not the same. This step adds considerably to the project timeline but should not be skipped.
tized list of functions, and the strength and reputation of the supplier. Include senior management and the whole project team in the supplier decision. You will be committed for 3-5 years and the chance of a successful implementation increases dramatically when the whole organization is involved and wants it to succeed.

There are hundreds of telematics suppliers, all claiming to be “the best solution for you.” This can be overwhelming, especially for those of us who are not IT experts. Most suppliers do a very good job of marketing, which only adds to the confusion when they show us fancy screens, maps and dashboards. This is why it is essential to follow a strict process, allowing us to identify the important differences in the systems and avoid getting caught up in a sales pitch.

Once you choose a supplier, produce a strong contract to protect yourself and minimize surprises down the road. Include long-term pricing, project timelines, performance measures and penalties for poor performance. I would recommend including very specific details so all expectations are clear. You may want to have your attorney review the contract before signing.

Once your new system is installed and implemented, you will need to designate someone to manage it. There will be reports to be run, vehicle assignments to be changed, vehicles to be added and removed, new users will need to have access and be trained, and some repairs are inevitable.

Implementing the new processes, reporting methods, management tools and having people trained will all take time. Assemble a realistic and well communicated plan and you will receive the expected benefits before you know it. Then give your team (and yourself) a pat on the back for a job well done.

Mike Moser is founder and president of MyFleetDept.com, a full service fleet management and consulting company. He is also founder and chairman of the Utility Line Clearance Fleet Committee (ULCFC) and has 25 years of vehicle, equipment and fleet management experience with 10 years as director of fleet & purchasing for a major utility line clearance contractor.

Common Telematics Benefits:
- Reduced fuel consumption
- Improved safety/reduced accidents
- Lower insurance cost
- Improved productivity
- Reduced payroll expense
- Increased asset utilization
- Reduced maintenance cost
- Reduced manual administrative processes (paperless/back office integration)
- Eliminate unauthorized equipment use
- Provide customer requested data
- Improved regulatory compliance
- Crew locate/property damage verification
- Improved customer service
- Efficient emergency/storm response

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Tree care professionals who invest now in alternative fuels and other alternative technologies can realize significant cost savings in the long run. Industry trucks and equipment have developed to be expensive and highly specialized. However, investing in the next level of specialization can actually cut costs. Below are a few tips on how to upgrade fleets, cut down on operating expenses and “green up” the company image.

Better bucket trucks

Business practices are moving toward more specialization – finding the right tool for the right job. This modus operandi applies to aerial lift trucks, a staple for any tree care business. When the bucket is being used on an aerial lift truck, it’s tapping into a diesel or gasoline engine that is designed to pull thousands of pounds – not to lift a 200-pound worker into the air. Vehicle engines are made to move, and sitting still, idling, is even harder on engines than being in motion. The truck engine is highly overpowered for the relatively small task of lifting a bucket.

Instead, shut the big engine down and run the bucket on a battery or power cell. More generally known as alternative power units, or APUs, these work-truck add-ons are no ordinary batteries. They have lots of power to operate the lift safely and smoothly. Generators are always an option as well, and are certainly an improvement over using the truck’s engine, but the electric APUs use zero fuel and have zero tailpipe emissions. Consider the amount of time aerial lifts are used. Running an aerial lift on traditional fuel could cost up to $4 per gallon of diesel, or it could cost 8 to 16 cents per kilowatt. Add to that the wear-and-tear spared the truck engine, and it’s clear that investing in an APU can translate into substantial savings.

For those running buckets more often, hybrid bucket trucks are worth a look. A hybrid truck can shut down and turn on the truck engine automatically, charging the bucket battery whenever it gets low. This has the potential for serious savings on diesel/gasoline fuel costs. However, while the batteries are fairly inexpensive, the return on investment for hybrid trucks is still longer at this time, depending on size and accessories. Hybrid truck costs should decrease over time as the market expands. Regardless, a long-term investment such as a hybrid truck makes great sense for a business that’s in it for long-term profits or interested in cleaning up its image.

Lighten the load and the fuel tank

Too often tree care companies end up with overpowered tools. There is no reason to “swat flies with a sledge hammer” when the fly swatter will do just fine, and this is true of truck weight and hauling potential as well. A fleet manager will know best if his or her trucks typically haul well below their pulling power, but even small adjustments can make a big difference in fuel costs.
Aluminum bodies and fiberglass chassis are available from major manufacturers; you need only ask.

With careful evaluation, the right mix of strength and streamlining can increase fuel efficiency 1 to 2 percent for every 100 pounds taken off a truck, according to fueleconomy.gov. Synergy Design & Production, a “lightweighting” firm, says work trucks can often lose 1,000 pounds or more by switching to aluminum and other lighter parts and accessories. It depends on the truck’s use, of course, but a decrease of 1,000 pounds could mean a 10 percent increase in fuel economy. That could translate to a 10 percent reduction in fuel costs! The technology is here—fleets are saving and maintaining their regular operations.

Costs can be cut in the fuel tank as well by filling it with air! Natural gas and propane both have comparable energy to diesel, but their prices per gallon tend to run about a dollar less than diesel and be more stable in price. Conversions and new alternative-fueled vehicles are both options from many major dealers. For large fleets and even off-road equipment such as wood chippers, some natural gas and propane suppliers will cut a deal on equipment upgrades or a refueling station if they supply (sell) the fuel. Or, there may be a refueling station nearby. Check the U.S. Department of Energy’s website (http://energy.gov) for alternative fueling station locations throughout the nation.

Find some funding—or some help

Federal, state and local programs for helping with vehicle purchases can be found in almost every major city/metropolitan area. These programs help improve air quality, reduce the need for petroleum and strengthen energy independence. The Department of Energy’s website maintains the most up-to-date national listings of grant opportunities and information on alternative fuels and other technologies for tree care and other industry fleets. Also, be sure to check the local Clean Cities Coalition for an area representative with information on the technologies or alternative fuels mentioned above. Helpful links are listed below.

- Department of Energy website: www.afdc.energy.gov
- Dept. of Energy grant opportunities: www.afdc.energy.gov/afdc/laws
- Clean Cities coalitions: www.afdc.energy.gov/cleanCities/coalitions
- Example Power Cell: www.energyxtreme.net
- “Lightweighting” company: www.synergydesignandproduction.com

Kelli Angelone is with Houston-Galveston (Texas) Clean Cities/Clean Vehicles program (www.houston-cleanCities.org), part of the Houston-Galveston Area Council (www.h-gac.com). She promotes the use of alternative fuels, advanced technologies and clean vehicle grant opportunities.

The Houston-Galveston Area Council will host the Clean Fleet Technologies Conference 2011, “Fueling the Choice,” October 19, 2011, at the Humble Civic Center in Humble, Texas. Topics on the agenda include natural gas, propane, electric vehicles, ethanol, biodiesel, and fueling stations. For more information or to register, go to: www.houston-cleanCities.org/2011_ATC_conf.htm.
Starting a company in 1929, the beginning of the Great Depression – and with a $400 loan – could have been disastrous for Ira F. Wickes, Sr., but his company, Ira Wickes/Arborists, in Suffern, New York, not only survived, but thrived. “My grandfather began by planting trees in the exclusive gated community, Tuxedo Square, with my grandmother Helen running the office,” says Ira’s grandson John, who runs the company, now Wickes Arborists, with his brother Jim. “He hit it off with a lot of those folks. They’d hire him and then go down to Florida for the winter. The crews would stay on the grounds all winter looking after the trees and the lawns.”

Among the trees the company planted were four Norway spruces that became Christmas trees in Rockefeller Square. John still has a slice from the trunk of one of them on a wall in his office, outlining the company’s history (facing page).

Ira Wickes/Arborists helped clear power lines for the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s. When Dutch elm disease struck, they identified sick trees and did pesticide applications and tree removals. When power chain saws were invented in 1945, they cleared trees for transmission lines. They joined the National Arborist Association, now TCIA, in 1949.

Ira’s son, Ira Wickes Jr., joined the company and began working in the field in 1952. That year the company cleared the right of way for the new three-mile long Tappan Zee Bridge that was built across the Hudson River north of New York City. “That completely changed our business,” John says. “In the 1960s and 1970s there was a huge construction boom and we did a lot of tree removals and clearing. As the countryside became more suburban, we did more tree planting.”

In 1972, the company moved to Spring Valley, N.Y. Ira Sr. passed away, and Ira Jr. became president of the company. He began acquiring other tree care companies in the area and by the mid-1980s all three of his children – John, Jim and Jennifer – had joined the company.

In the early 1980s the gypsy moth infestation hit and “all hell broke loose,” John says. “We were working double shifts. Business multiplied.” In 1988, Ira sold the business to his three children, and when Jennifer had twins, she sold her share to her brothers. Jim, a Certified Treecare Safety Professional, is in charge of production and John handles sales and the business end. Approximately half the work that Wickes Arborists – the name is changing to reflect the fact that Ira retired long ago – is residential and half commercial and institutional. One client is a nearby military academy whose contracts they’ve bid on successfully since the 1980s. “Some of our clients have been with us for three generations,” John says. “They’re very loyal.”

Almost half their work is general tree care, including pruning, cabling and braces, root zone treatments and tree removals. One third is PHC. This includes their Arborwatch IPM program, which includes regular inspections, evaluation and monitoring of key plants on properties to reduce damage from insects and disease. About 10 percent is lawn care.

The remainder is consulting. John became a registered consulting arborist in 2004 and a certified tree risk assessor in 2010. One of his clients is a historic zoo in central New York City, which hired him to assess other possibly hazardous trees after...
one tree caused a fatality there in the summer of 2010.

Wickes Arborists uses the Arborsonic 3D, a sonic tomograph, which uses sound waves to evaluate the stability of trees, as part of their tree evaluation process. Wickes Arborists is the U.S. distributor for Arborsonic, which is manufactured in Hungary.

“It’s really cool,” John says. “It gives a picture of what’s going on inside the tree. In the next 5, 10, 15 years, it will become the international standard.”

At the company’s peak, about three years ago, Wickes Arborists had 32 employees. They’re building it back slowly with quality employees, he says. They now have about 16, with 10 in the field, with several carrying credentials such as Certified Arborist, Commercial Pesticide Technician and Applicator, Certified Treecare Safety Professional and Certified Nursery and Landscape Professional.

“Some of our team members have been with us for two generations and have been through the trials and tribulations of the...
past couple of decades,” John says. One of those trials and tribulations took place about five years ago, when a climber fell from a tree and was killed. “It was three of the worst days of my life, in the hospital with his family.”

They called Peter Gerstenberger, TCIA’s senior advisor for safety, compliance & standards, who guided them through OSHA’s nine-month investigation.

“We had implemented tailgate safety training many years before,” John says. “We had it all documented and had the employees sign off on it. Because of TCIA and our compliance with training and safety, it was determined that the employee had done something against his training. A fatality is one of the most horrible things you can have happen, but I was very proud that by doing things right that we were able to survive that investigation as a company.”

Because of the experience, he’s written a narrative summary, “How to Survive a Fatality,” that he thought would be helpful for owners of other tree care companies that have had a fatality.

Accreditation

Twenty-five years ago, the brothers hired an executive coach from Kraft Associates/ODA Inc., to help them set up a system to manage the company.

“My brother and I mostly agree on what to do,” John says, “but when we can’t, we have an outside person we can go to. He’s almost like a mentor. It dovetails with what Accreditation is doing.”

The company became accredited in July of this year. “We’d heard about it several years ago, but at the time, the economy was tanking and we were focused on keeping the company afloat,” he says. “Quality people are looking for a quality organization. When you have a quality organization, they’re more likely to be attracted to you.”

And that’s part of what they are seeking with Accreditation. Their existing clients appreciate that they’re accredited, and John and Jim are hoping that people looking for a tree care company will see the value in it and be willing to buy their services. Their employees see that they’re accredited and feel good about being part of it.

The office manager did most of the work to become accredited, John says. “We learned mostly that we were doing 97 percent of everything we needed to be doing. The hardest part was documenting everything we were doing so it could be verified.”

He’s hoping the company will continue to grow at a sustainable pace in the next five years or so, especially the PHC, hazard tree assessment and Aborsonic divisions. Accreditation will help, especially in terms of corporate and government work, because these are the clients who see the value in it.

“I think every municipality should have some kind of certification in their bids, and hopefully Accreditation,” John says. “We’ve been trying to push Accreditation for federal contracts, saying it should be a requirement. If it can become a requirement, it would set the bar to where people have to do things according to industry standards and verify them. That would help everyone.”

Accreditation does have its privileges …

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Homeowner dies after fall from ladder

Clyde Briggs, 60, was injured August 1, 2011, in Johnstown, Colorado, when he fell from a ladder while cutting branches in a tree with a chain saw. He suffered a severe head laceration and also sustained brain injuries. He died three days later, according to The Tribune of Greeley, Colo.

Man seriously injured in fall from tree

A Fergus Falls, Minnesota, man was life flighted to Fargo August 2, 2011, after falling from the tree he was trying to cut down. Steven Frendin, 59, was seriously injured when he fell 12 feet from a tree at a Fergus Falls residence. The extent and type of his injuries was not immediately known.

The home’s resident called police around 4:15 p.m. to ask that an officer be present while Frendin cut down the tree. The resident was worried that part of the tree would fall into the roadway and create a traffic hazard. The officer arrived close to 6 p.m. and was directing traffic while Frendin worked on the cutting. At one point, Frendin cut off a large tree branch, lost his hold on the tree and fell. The officer called an ambulance and began administering first aid to Frendin.

The large branch fell onto the road and city crews arrived later to remove it, according to The Fergus Falls Daily Journal.

Climber dies after 60-foot fall

A man cutting down a tree Aug. 3, 2011, in Ocean City, Maryland, plunged 60 feet to his death apparently when his safety harness gave way. Jeremy David Bostick, 35, of Hebron, worked for a tree removal company. A crew from the company was cutting down a tree on a private property when the accident occurred.

A preliminary investigation by police found the safety harness he was using was not rigged properly, and when Bostick began his descent the harness gave out and he fell, according to an Ocean City Today report. The other workers who witnessed the accident called 911. Bostick was taken by ambulance to Atlantic General Hospital in Berlin, where he was pronounced dead.

Bostick had climbed some of the tallest trees in Maryland, was studying to be an arborist and was considered by his peers as one of the best climbers in the area, according to his family, as reported on www.delmarvanow.com. He was rappelling 20 feet down the side of the trunk of the pine, readying the next section for removal. As he leaned back, the rope securing him slipped out of its 3-inch-deep notch and he fell.

“He’s done that 500 times, a thousand times, at least,” his supervisor on the job told www.delmarvanow.com.

The supervisor said he watched the 150-foot climbing rope come loose and ran toward Bostick, screaming his name. “There was nothing I could do,” he said. “I got within 6 feet of the tree. He stared at me the whole way down. I looked at him, and I kept going, ‘breathe, just breathe.’ He let one short breath out, and I knew he was gone.”

“Jeremy probably had the most raw talent of anybody I’ve met in the tree care industry that occurred during the month of August 2011. Graphic compiled from reports gathered by, or submitted to, TCIA staff.
business,” the supervisor said.

Shem Bostick, 44, called his brother’s death “a bizarre accident” that stands in stark contrast with the stellar safety record of local tree trimmers. “He’d done it for so long,” he said in the www.delmarvanow.com report. “He was extraordinarily good.”

Tree-trimmer killed in truck incident

A Nipomo, California, man died August 4, 2011, after being run over by a tree-trimming bucket truck in a hilly residential section of Solvang, in Santa Barbara County. Armando Medina, 53, was part of a two-man tree-trimming crew near the top of a hill.

While the crew’s second member was trying to disconnect a chipper-shredder trailer from the truck, the truck began rolling down the hill, running over Medina, fatally injuring him. Medina was flown by CalStar helicopter to Santa Barbara Cottage Hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

The truck was fully loaded with sections of tree limbs. It jumped the curb and came to rest in the front yard of a home on the south side of the sloping street, according to the Santa Maria Times report.

Man killed in logging accident

A man was killed August 10, 2011, in Freedom Township, Michigan, after a cut tree fell on him. A family had hired a tree service to remove limbs, and one of the limbs fell and hit Stanley Grubaugh, 40, who co-owned the tree service company with his brother, fatally injuring him. He was pronounced dead at the scene, according to The Manchester Enterprise and Lansing State Journal reports.

Submitted by Jon Stauffer, owner of Majestic Tree in Dewitt, Michigan.

Climber killed by struck-by

A 24-year-old tree service employee died August 11, 2011, in Forest Hill, Harford County, Maryland, after being struck and pinned between the cut limb, or a limb from an adjacent tree, and the trunk of the tree he was climbing.

Andreas Galdamez, 24, of Glen Burnie, Md., had climbed to about 30 feet and, while trimming the tree, a section subsequently fell and trapped him at that level. Rescue personnel attempted to reach him by ladder but, due to the terrain, the 200-foot distance from the road and the unstable tree sections above them, were unable to do so. A bucket truck from the tree service was then used in the rear yard to allow emergency personnel to access the victim. A firefighter/paramedic was raised using the bucket and pronounced the victim dead.

After an initial investigation, additional resources were brought in, including a crew from another tree service, to extract the victim. Using the bucket truck on site, rescuers cut away the unstable tree sections and lowered the victim to the ground. Approximately 60 personnel aided the effort, according to reports from The Dagger, the Harford County Sheriff’s Office and the Harford County Volunteer Fire and EMS Association.

(Continued on page 64)
MORBARK’S NEW PRESIDENT MAINTAINS FORMULA FOR SUCCESS

Company At a Glance

Morbark, Inc.

Location: Headquartered in Winn, Michigan, Morbark has dealers throughout the U.S. and Canada, plus Asia, Europe, Australia, Africa, Central America, South America.

History: Founded by Norval Morey in 1957 with a machine that would remove bark from logs at sawmills. His son, Lon Morey, became president and CEO in 1997.

By Tamsin Venn

Executive Profile:

James “Shoe” Shoemaker Jr. was named president in August 2011, replacing Lon Morey, who will remain as chair of Morbark’s Board of Directors. Prior to his appointment, Shoemaker served as Morbark’s vice president of operations and board member. He has been with the company for eight years in senior management positions.

What is your newest product for tree care?

Our newest product is a lightweight gas stump grinder, marketed for the small tree service user as well as the rental market. We also have a new lightweight, 18-inch, hand-fed chipper. We designed the chipper so it meets stringent requirements – it weighs less than 10,000 pounds. It has been received well in North America and Australia.

We have modified and beefed up the 20-inch M20R forestry chipper to handle the rugged duty cycle of small forestry operations. Most of the drum chippers in that market are very large, and require large pieces of equipment to haul them around and service them. This chipper provides a great opportunity for some of the smaller loggers and forestry operations.

In addition to the commercial tree care market, we are actively involved in biomass energy systems with an equity interest and manufacturing contract with HTI Inc., a technology company that designs gasification systems to convert biomass into electricity. We are in a joint venture of building gasifiers that produce electricity using biomass fuels, wood waste from municipalities and the forest. HTI (Heat Transfer International) has the patented technology and their systems take the concern about air quality right out of the equation.

A lot of the wood byproducts come from tree service companies, and those products might go to a landfill to be buried or could be burned. The industry is slowly beginning to evaluate the energy opportunities within that product cycle. The 100-megawatt Gainesville Renewable Energy Center in Florida, a $500 million plant, is one of the first large facilities using biomass to generate electricity using municipal wood waste and forest residue.

What image does your company look to portray?

We’re constantly trying to protect our reputation for making products that are the most rugged and capable to withstand the duty cycles our customers take them through. If they can amortize that equipment over an 8- to 10-year cycle, they will get a lot more bang for their buck. We support Morbark equipment forever. We have parts for any machine, even those made over 40 years ago. If we don’t have it, we’ll make it. Someone will send us a digital photo of an old part, with a pack of...
Marlboros next to it for scale, and we will make it. We’ll work 24 hours to get that part done to make sure our customer doesn’t experience down time.

**Does your company have a Mission Statement or Statement of Values that you promote and follow?**

We have values to which both Lon Morey and I hold our people accountable: Honesty. Respect. Quality. Accountability. We do what it takes to get the job done. We correct mistakes. Our founder left us with the legacy of innovation, always trying to build equipment for tomorrow’s work. We listen to both employee and customer input. We always try to keep an open mind to new ideas.

**What is greatest challenge your business is currently facing?**

We have two challenges. Our biggest challenge philosophically is to make sure we are getting the voice of the customer into the organization, since we sell through dealers. How do we gain an understanding on how to make our customers successful? Through our dealers, we get weekly customer input and we plug that information into Morbark’s design and management team.

The other challenge is coming from our supply chain. All the engine providers, such as Caterpillar, John Deere, Perkins, Cummins and Kubota, are trying to scramble to meet the Tier 4 emissions requirements from the federal government. That is imposing lots of new product and service challenges – the engine companies all have their own flavor and solution and are having problems getting the product in on time. It’s not exclusive to Morbark; it’s all the OEMs (original equipment manufacturers). We’ve been there before, going from Tier 2 to Tier 3, but the customers are going to be in for a lot of sticker shock.

**What would you say most defines your corporate culture?**

The employees from the top to the bottom – and bottom to the top – are all committed to continuous improvement, and the bellwether for that at our company is to start any task with clear requirements. By the employees fully understanding the requirements of their job, they will provide...
defect-free products.

Does your company use Social Media for marketing?

We are looking at that. The typical footprint really doesn’t merit it. Our dealers are not pulling us in that direction, but six months from now, probably I will be offering a different answer. We’re throwing resources at it. We’ve got Facebook and YouTube as hot buttons on our website.

If I interviewed some of your customers, what would they say about you?

I am confident they will say that, regardless of time and circumstance, we are always in their corner, be it customers or dealers in Brazil, Australia or North America. We are extremely cautious about adding dealers to our network. We interview a lot of their customers. We will not engage in a long-term relationship unless the dealers are absolutely committed to a customer’s success.

Does your company do anything in particular to promote social and environmental responsibility?

Our chairman, Lon Morey, manages the Morey Foundation, one of the largest foundations in Michigan. The Foundation has supported the efforts of the Morey Cancer Center. Our chairman has sponsored the construction of Hospice House; donated to Central Michigan University, in education and performing arts; was actively involved in building a wonderful recreation center for central Michigan residents in Mount Pleasant. The Morey and Morbark names are actively involved in social and cultural improvements in central Michigan. Both Lon Morey and I expect our employees to get involved in efforts as simple as managing a Little League team. I am very involved in the Community Foundation, which manages 60 scholarship funds. We’re also absolutely committed to improving the safety of tree crew members, and protecting these people while they are operating our or other people’s equipment.

Why does your company support TCIA as the industry’s trade association?

We’ve been a supporter for decades. We’re a Crown level PACT (Partners Advancing Commercial Treecare) partner. We’re very involved in the trade shows, we’re a large exhibitor, and active in Winter Management Conference and special projects, especially chipper safety. One of the programs we’re involved in with TCIA is working to launch a chipper oper-

ator safety program. The industry does not have an employer-certified training program on how to operate chippers safely. Morbark hosted a safety forum for national tree care companies and three of our major competitors – Altec, Bandit and Vermeer, to learn about the concerns and the opportunities for improvement for chipper safety. It was the first time the manufacturers got together with tree care companies, and out of that came a real desire for TCIA to develop a program. TCIA has some wonderful safety programs. TCIA’s Peter Gerstenberger (senior advisor for safety, compliance & standards and TCI Magazine technical editor) is highly competent.

We had the national tree service companies talk about their crew profiles. Some of the challenges are there. Unfortunately a typical tree crew of three has chipper duties assigned to the one person, physically strong, yet with the least experience. While they receive some training, it’s not always formal. So there’s generally a kind of knowledge gap. The annual turnover of most of these companies is quite high, particularly with the entry level people, and those are the people who are operating the equipment. It creates a business barrier. Morbark and Lon Morey and I want to see if we can do something about that. That was what we were reaching for when we put a forum together, and we’re very happy TCIA has gotten involved. We’ll help them financially and with resources.

Closing thought?

I am passionate about customer success. Many companies have programs on customer satisfaction. I’m pushing Morbark not to be satisfied with a satisfied customer but rather aim for customer success. That is something that takes place throughout the entire relationship: How do the customers feel about the company while making inquiries, through their experience of buying the equipment, operating it, getting the service? How is the experience five or six years later? Are we doing things to set them up for success? Our business strategies have been altered in the past year to focus on the voice of the customer. There’s a big difference between satisfied and successful customers.
“Tricky” part of storm cleanup is working together

“Catastrophic Storm Cleanup Can Be a Tricky Proposition” (TCI August 2011) should have said “It takes everyone doing their part” or “Volunteers make the difference!”

I have lived in Joplin, Missouri, my whole life and have owned Affordable Tree Service for 16 years. I am a (12-year) member of TCIA, member of the Joplin Tree Board and a Certified Arborist.

Having read the article I am sure much of the information is true, but I do not chase storms. I do take issue with Terry Tree Service and the problem with volunteers.

Joplin has seen over 100,000 registered volunteers and probably over 100,000 unregistered volunteers. Without these people, Joplin would have been devastated even more.

As a tree service and volunteer, we started the next day after the storm helping to clear the streets for people like Terry Tree Service to do their jobs. After three months of storm work we have yet to have a problem with any other group trying to help.

It is different if the storm is in your own back yard. When you have friends and family dead or dying or homes and business flat on the ground, your attitude changes – or it should.

Thank God for all who came and helped Joplin, Missouri, in anyway they could.

The “tricky” part in a storm: To have a plan and get everyone to work together.

Gregg N. Wilkerson, owner
Affordable Tree Service
Joplin, Missouri

Disappointed in rigging piece

I was disappointed in the recent rigging article (“Applied Research for Climbing and Rigging: Single Rope Technique,” TCI Letters & Emails).

(Continued on page 62)
Cranes are an optional tool for arborists, but knowing what cranes do, how they work and the science behind them is a requirement for anyone in tree care today. For this article, I am going focus on load moment indicators, or LMI Systems, the computer system on board the crane, and the strengths and weaknesses, or limitations, of these systems. We'll continue with a bit about industry regulations, because there have been some serious changes that you need to know about, and finish with some discussion about standards and the difference between regulations and standards, and certification and licensing.

**LMI systems**

There are a lot of misconceptions about LMI, or load moment indicator, systems. From my experience, it seems that there are usually two types of crane operators, “old timers” and “new timers.” Old timers don’t particularly like the computer systems and try to avoid them. The new timers are the younger kids coming into the crane and tree care industries, and they love computer games so they love looking at the screens. Both types of personalities can have a difficult time with LMI systems.

**Let’s first take a look at LMI strengths.**

The important parts of the LMI systems involve dynamic measurements. As the conditions are changing with the lift, the LMI will monitor these changes and provide readouts indicating what is happening at that moment (hence the name). This is a very strong point for LMI systems. They also lock out the crane functions as you approach the edge of the lifting envelope. A weakness with an LMI system can be exposed when an arborist loads up the crane and is making that final cut. The final cut tends to shock the crane if it is not properly preloaded. If the log weight is not properly calculated the LMI may place the crane into an overload and function cut-out. This feature may not help too much in this particular situation. In the normal crane lifting the LMI is a great safety feature.

Another LMI strength is that the LMI dynamically calculates radius and working heights. It takes measurements for boom angle, boom length and load weight and calculates the gross capacity, radius, working heights and any other limitations that you may have. The LMI then compares this information against the load chart data in the LMI computer brain and makes warning and lockout decisions.

**Now let’s take a look at some limitations.**

Some of these can be pretty serious. Calibration cannot be confirmed. Let’s say you just had your crane serviced and the service tech did a calibration on the LMI. You feel pretty comfortable. How long is that calibration going to last? We can’t be sure. Are there methods that an operator can determine how closely the calibration is to the accurate levels? Yes, there are some things that you can do. You can measure radii, boom lengths and use a known test weight and compare the measured data with LMI readouts. But if all that you are doing is looking at the readouts and figures and it isn’t calibrated properly, then the data could be gibberish and you would never know until after it is too late!

The next LMI limitation is operator programming reliability or lying to the computer. If you have a certain type of setup but are programming with something else, you are placing bad data into the computer. The computer is a dumb machine and if you put in bad data it is going to give you bad data back. If you are using this equipment to your advantage and you program it properly, you are good. If you either overlook or ignore proper program-
ming, that is going to get you into trouble.

With this next LMI limitation, there is a firestorm of controversy. Crane or LMI manufacturers disagree on using an LMI as a scale. Generally, their weighing function is not particularly accurate. It has been my experience that LMI systems do not make good scales, and they certainly are not calibrated as legal scales. Some LMI manufacturers will contest this assertion. LMI systems are not designed for weighing. They are designed to read specific pressure of the lift cylinder and shut off operation at the edge of the load chart capacity/lifting envelope. The small variations in pressure to accurately read weight differences are in question. You may have to be the judge through direct experience.

Load moment

The word “moment” is one of the most misunderstood concepts out there in the lifting community. Moment is an engineering term describing weight and distance; it is not a point in time.

The easiest definition of moment is: torque about a point. If you think about lug nuts on the wheels of an automobile, the torque that you are applying to the lug nut is what you are measuring. You are measuring the force value, or input, on the lug wrench driving it into the nut. As you go farther out, increasing the distance, you’re increasing the torque, and moment is an opportunity to describe that. The technical definition of moment is: force x arm (a distance value) = moment

When you have a load moment indicator you are talking about load weight and distance (arm) and trying to capture that data and display it and use it.

An example I use in my training class is this: If I have a 16-pound bowling ball, how long can I hold it up next to my shoulder? Probably for a long time. If I take the same 16 pounds and put my arm out straight, I am not going to be able to hold it for very long.

So, in measuring moment, where am I measuring the weight from? The distance identified on the crane is from the center of rotation of the turntable to the center of the load weight, which is why positioning the crane becomes so critical.

The LMI pictured (figure 1) is based on an Altec LMI system design, but many of the crane manufacturers will have similar designs. Where it says anti-two-block switch it is really simple because that is the On/Off switch. You may have tripped the anti-two-block weight and raised it up too high, or not. You are carrying a signal down the black lead that you see going to the boom. This is attached to the reel.

The reel has a couple of measuring points; two are potentiometers: a boom-length and a boom angle potentiometer. Let me describe a potentiometer in simple terms. Let’s say I was in my dining room and I have a light dimmer switch, which operates basically as a potentiometer. As I turn my dimmer switch all the way up it provides electricity to the lights and we get bright lights. If I slide it down, then it changes the resistance value so that the electrical signal going in changes the lights and it affects the output of the lights.

The same is going on with the boom length potentiometer. In the shortest position the boom electrical signal to the computer is going to be a voltage value due to a resistance value. When it goes all the way out it is going to be another voltage value and different resistance value. It doesn’t really matter what that voltage is for the operators only that it reads accurately. With service technicians, it is a different story because the technician gets into the calibration process.

The boom angle information is displayed the same way. If I have a boom sitting at a low angle and the operator reads an electronic angle indicator on the LMI, the electronic readout data comes from a potentiometer. The computer interprets voltage values from the potentiometer and displays an angle readout. When I raise the boom, the pendulum hangs straight down but changes the angle relative to the boom. The computer measures a changing voltage and resistance and interprets a different angle, if calibrated properly.

Then you get into how the computer understands the weights. This is where it gets interesting. There is a component called a pressure transducer, which is a little cartridge that does the same thing as a potentiometer. Hydraulic oil enters into the pressure transducer. Oil pressure inside the pressure transducer changes as loads change on the lift cylinder. The pressure transducer changes this pressure to a variable resistance to change voltage signals. The changing voltage is interpreted as a changing weight by the LMI computer. The operator is able to view this readout on the LMI screen. These transducers must be calibrated and/or replaced by service tech-
nicians. However the operator can check their accuracy by lifting measured test weights and compare the LMI readouts. “New timers” love these readouts and as long as their accuracy is checked regularly, the LMI is a great tool.

Most crane manufacturers feel very uncomfortable making any claim of weight accuracy due the possible liability concerns. As for LMI design, most crane manufacturers claim it is only designed to turn off or shut down at the edge of the lifting envelope. Most LMI manufacturers tend to inflate the accuracy of their LMI systems as a selling tool. Which is right? You will have to judge based on your equipment and experience as to which side of the argument you come down on.

So the “old timers” and “new timers” have a lot to deal with. The “old timers” don’t like to deal with these new-fangled computer and programming things. These operators will do the manual methods as always and try to find ways to override or bypass this new technology. And the “new timers” love the displays, but sometimes trust too much! These guys/women love the technology, but have a tough time getting themselves to confirm things with the tried and true manual measurement methods. Both groups of people can be dangerous and both can learn something from each other.

**Regulations, certification & licensing**

Let’s talk about regulations. There are two different regulations that affect cranes that you need to be aware of. The first one is housed in OSHA 29 CFR Part 1910, which are standards for general industry. Tree care falls under these standards. The second regulation is found in 29 CFR Part 1926, which are for construction.

Tree care folks don’t directly fall under 29 CFR 1926 or the new Construction crane standard that took effect in November 2010. I am hearing rumors that 1910 is to be updated to correspond to what 1926 already has in place. As I mentioned earlier, 29 CFR Part 1910 covers general industry and tree care; and the crane section of the regulation is Subpart N or 1910.180, which is where the industry would fall.

The new Construction crane rule is found at 29 CFR Subpart CC, or 1926.1400 through 1926.1442. Some of the highlights of this new rule include:

- Assessment of ground conditions, 1926.1402. The ground condition issues being raised with the new standard include whether the ground can support the crane and who is responsible for determining that it can. The way that they define it in the new standard is the “controlling entity.” It isn’t really clear as to what/who this is but at least it is mentioned, and I think that is a good thing.
- Qualification and certification of crane operators, 1926.1427. This is now a requirement and there is a four-year window to get up to speed.
- Rules for working in the vicinity of power lines have changed dramatically.
- Written certification tests may be administered in languages understood by the operator candidate. They haven’t made it “shall” or “should” yet, but you know where it is headed. Employers must use
qualified riggers for rigging operations during assembly and disassembly.

Remember that I am speaking to the construction industry with the new standard. This doesn’t directly impact you, but a word to the wise is that this is the direction the law is going. The sooner you get on board with some of these changes the better off you will be. Regulations are the law as written by OSHA. The Z133 committee will have to pay attention to these changes.

Standards

Next we have industry standards developed by industry groups. The ANSI Z133 safety standard is the best example, and is the bible for those in tree care. But it isn’t the same as OSHA law. Significantly, where 1910.180 and Z133 differ as far as cranes go, the OSHA Standard takes precedence. OSHA can recognize an industry standard such as Z133 for specific things and by doing so can enforce it as law.

The important industry standard for cranes is ASME B30.5, which is mobile and locomotive crane standard – one of the bigger standards. There are a couple of others, but this is the main one that I want to point out.

ASME, the American Society for Mechanical Engineers, is a private organization that studies issues and puts forth recommendations and best practices as standards. The American National Standards Institute, ANSI, is an entity that certifies groups such as ASME that create these standards.

Certification and licensing

The last topic for discussion is certification. The terms certification and licensing are often used interchangeably and they are not the same thing. Certification is when you demonstrate a certain knowledge level and skill level and it must be accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency. Three of them are: OSHA, ANSI and NCCA (National Commission for Certifying Agencies).

Licensing is the state or city giving permission to conduct an activity within their jurisdiction. In order to do that you must meet the state and/or city requirements and pay fees and then you get a license. In the crane community, certification requires written and practical testing. You have to apply and show proper identification. A certification is usually a skill-based demonstration whereas licensing is a permission.

The National Commission for the Certification of Crane Operators (NCCCO) certification has a listing of state licensing requirements on its website (www.nccco.org). However with the new crane law that was enacted last fall, the crane operator will have four years to get his or her certification when operating in a construction environment. This does not impact tree care today, but if the buzz is true, that the general industry crane regulations may be updated in the near future, you can expect that certification will be required, and possibly a license in some locales.

There are a couple of interesting exceptions. For instance, New York, Rhode Island, Connecticut and Massachusetts have state-based programs and require state
licensing. They don’t recognize the NCCCO card. Some cities also have some licensing requirements. Examples include Chicago, New Orleans, New York City, Omaha, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, Omaha, New York City and New Orleans recognize the NCCCO card. This is a very changing world in cranes.

Joseph W. Birkbeck III is a master instructor with Altec Industries, Inc. in Birmingham, Alabama, and a member of the Altec Sentry Safety Department. He is also an NCCCO Certified Crane Operator and an NCCCO examiner. This article was excerpted from his presentation on the same subject at TCI EXPO 2010 in Pittsburgh. He will speak at TCI EXPO 2011 in Hartford this fall on “Determining Log Weight, Using a Load Chart and Adding Personal Safety Margins.” (Register at http://expo.tcia.org/)

For a thorough discussion of load charts and more about LMI Systems, see “Crane Safety – An Operator’s Perspective,” by Joseph W. Birkbeck III in the April 2010 issue of TCI. For information on basic inspection, basic machine setup and a little bit about crane maintenance and basic emergency procedures, see “Crane Safety – An Operator’s Perspective: Basics” on TCIA’s webpage at www.tcia.org; under the Safety tab click on Safety Articles.

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September 2011). It would seem to me that with all the great rigging accessories out there, such as throw cords/weights, cambium savers, rope placement and retrieval tools such as the Sidekick, that you would run an article outlining the best use practices of these and other tools that actually increase ease, efficiency and safety. I’ve been a climber for 30 years and I know it’s the little things that make all the difference.

T. Hayden, retired arborist
Epps Tree
Chapel Hill, North Carolina
A motorist hit a worker from a tree service August 12, 2011, in Hampden Township, Pennsylvania. Patricia Brode of Mechanicsburg did not follow work signs and traffic directions for a one-lane roadway, then attempted to avoid oncoming vehicles and struck a flagger directing traffic. The impact threw the flagger some distance into the front yard of a neighboring home.

Brode continued driving southbound and avoided colliding with more vehicles before she was stopped by other workers from the service. The flagman was taken to Hershey Medical Center for treatment of non-life-threatening injuries, according to WHTM-TV, ABC channel 27 in Harrisburg.

(Continued on page 65)
Accident Briefs
(Continued from page 64)

Trimmer shocked by power line

A tree trimmer was injured when he was shocked by a power line August 12, 2011, in Swissvale, Pennsylvania. A witness reported a line was lying on the branch the worker was removing and when he let go of the branch, he was jolted. His saw hit the wire and he jumped and sparks came out, according to a witness. Once down from the tree he sat down and started shaking, the witness said. The man complained of chest pains, but was listed in good condition at a hospital, according to WPXI/Pittsburgh.com.


Submit your local accident briefs to editor@tcia.org.
Way back in the 20th century, most sizable towns in Maine had places called “dumps,” not transfer stations. Dumps were places on the outskirts of town where trash was brought and burned — out in the open. Sometimes local residents drove their trash out to the dump on Saturdays. Folks with money would hire trash trucks that would come to their house and pick up their stuff and bring it to the dump. Probably everybody does this now.

Through the ’70s and maybe longer, the City of Ellsworth’s dump was located about a mile out beyond the MCM Hospital. The dump was kind of like where the gravel road just ended — at a huge horseshoe-shaped dumping area. Over the edge of the dumping areas were constant fires — at the bottom of very steep slopes. Folks could either toss their stuff down over the bank into the fires, or leave it on the edge and the dump manager would push it over the edge with his bulldozer. Lots of people brought a six-pack to the dump and socialized.

In addition to people bringing their household trash, contractors would truck in debris from their jobs. I was a tree pruning/removal contractor at the time — operating as Shamrock Tree Service. We would go to the dump often with our truckloads of brush and rotten wood. Our work vehicle was a 10-year-old Chevy truck with a 12-foot wooden stake body. It was a great truck but was getting old and beat up.

Worst part was that the truck had no automatic bed dump like other guys had. So I would always have to back up to the edge of the abyss, and me and whoever was with me at the time would climb up into the truck bed and slowly throw all the debris, piece by tangled piece, down into the roaring fire. Meanwhile the guys with the trucks that auto-dumped would look at us sympathetically, and drive off snickering.

We sure did get tired of unloading that truck by hand in the hot summer, right above the blazing, smoky fire below. Then one day, I was struck by a GREAT idea. Why not make the blazing, smoky fire below. Then one day, I was struck by a GREAT idea. Why not make the conflagration.

The next day we thought we’d give it a try. We got to the dump with a full load of tree parts, and my helper got out to watch. I put the truck into position 50 feet from the edge, went in reverse real fast, and then hit the brakes at the exact right moment. Boy, was I ever excited. One little problem happened, though. The brake pedal went right to the floor and the truck rolled its way over the edge of the slope and down into the inferno, driver still on board.

The slide down into the fire seemed like a slow motion bad dream. As the truck descended, the driver’s door was smashed closed forever by a big elm stump. I sensed possible danger.

So I climbed out the window and clumsily scrambled up to the top of the slope, where I was pulled to terra firma and safety.

Meanwhile, the dump keeper saw all the fuss, jumped on his bulldozer and hurried over to us. He threw me a chain and told me to go down and tie it to the truck and he’d pull it out. So I went back down and tied the chain to the front bumper. He immediately started pulling. The bumper immediately broke loose. So he hollered at me to try again, but this time, wrap the chain around some stronger underbelly part. Meanwhile, the fire had been attaching itself firmly to the back end of my truck.

This time the truck rescue worked. The truck was out of the fire like a phoenix rising from the ashes. However, the dual rear tires were burning up real fast. The fire very quickly spread from the tires to the wooden stake body. That nice oak floor burned up quickly, with a steady flame.

Meanwhile, the dump keeper had radioed the Ellsworth Fire Department. We could hear them coming.

A few seconds more passed and the fire found its way into the cab. The smoke from the burning foam truck seats was the blackest smoke I had ever seen! Then somehow the gas tank got involved in all the action. The cap blew off like a rocket, and a huge steady flame came roaring out of the gas tank filler pipe like a Fourth-of-July finale. I remembered that I had filled up the tank earlier in the day.

Well, nobody got hurt that day, and we all had some excitement. I later found out that my brake lines had burst because of my enthusiastic stomping on the brake pedal. I filled out some papers for the fire department, arranged for the truck to be towed to a junkyard, thanked the dump keeper, and got a ride from a good Samaritan to my home in nearby Trenton.

The mother of my children was home, and she heard a car pull in and a door slam. Meeting me at the front door, she said nervously “Eddie, where in the world is your truck? And what happened to your face? It’s all black?”

I said “Let’s sit in the living room for a minute. I’ve just come from the dump. Any cold beer in the house?”

At the time of the above incident, Edward O’Connell was the owner of Shamrock Tree Service in Trenton, Maine. More recently he owned Landscape HMO of Mount Airy in Philadelphia, until his recent retirement. PS: The six-pack, he says, got lost in the conflagration.
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