“Federal Funds” Boost Fuel-Reduction Business

A Region On Ice
The winter storm of '08 provides a cautionary tale for tree care companies, utilities
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It is said that Solomon once asked his wise men to invent him a sentence that would be true and appropriate in all times and situations. They presented him a ring inscribed with the words: “And this, too, shall pass away.”

The phrase is meant to remind us that all joys and successes are temporary, but so too are sorrows and failures. By constantly having something to look forward to, we are meant to find contentment.

After 10 years, you will notice a new picture and a new voice for this column. I’m looking forward to writing for Tree Care Industry Magazine and working with the leaders of this industry to create future joys and successes. Almost 14 years ago, when I interviewed for the position of assistant editor for a small but growing magazine about trees published by a small but growing arborist association, I doubt anyone in the room would have imagined where the magazine, the association and commercial arboriculture would be in 2010.

Our association is strong, a reflection of the vital industry we represent. As we head into the depths of winter with a recession we can’t seem to shake holding our fortunes and futures hostage, try to remember that our lives are constantly changing and recessions always end.

In fact, economists have already declared this recession over, as a record number of publicly traded companies beat Wall Street’s earnings expectations in the third quarter of 2009. But a closer look at those earnings reveals that a big portion of their profits came from cost-cutting, not revenue growth. Revenue was on track to drop 10 percent. We’re hearing much the same story in arboriculture. We’re all a little nervous that cost-cutting can only provide profits for so long.

Company owners I’ve talked with have laid people off, but they have managed to keep their best crews working. When I ask if the recession is over in their area, they are optimistic, but usually haven’t seen much movement in a positive direction. Most members seem to be doing what Wall Street is doing – holding on, cutting expenses, watching cash very closely, and waiting for what everyone hopes will be a spring rush of business.

The good news is that consumers can only put off maintenance for so long. When business picks up again, those companies ready to take advantage should see very strong growth. Manufacturers will benefit, too, since tree care companies have been running chippers and other equipment on longer replacement cycles.

Here in New England, the winters are long but eventually the snow melts, the sun returns and we venture back outside. Try to look at the business cycle the way those of us in northern climates look at winter – this, too, shall pass away.

Mark Garvin
Publisher

TCI’s mission is to engage and enlighten readers with the latest industry news and information on regulations, standards, practices, safety, innovations, products and equipment. We strive to serve as the definitive resource for commercial, residential, municipal and utility arborists, as well as for others involved in the care and maintenance of trees. The official publication of the non-profit Tree Care Industry Association, we vow to sustain the same uncompromising standards of excellence as our members in the field, who adhere to the highest professional practices worldwide.
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ON THE COVER: First Choice Tree Service crews perform fuel reduction services in the Southern Nevada mountains for the Nevada Division of Forestry. See the story on page 8.
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First Choice Tree Service crews work in the Mt. Charleston/Lee Canyon area while performing fuel reduction services for the Nevada Division of Forestry.

By Rick Howland

I

f you had a chipper running full out all day long, you’d probably say that your business was pretty good. If you had 10 to 15 crew members and a handful of chippers running all day, every day, you’d likely be ecstatic, especially in this economy. Maybe you’d even find it hard to believe.

But, yes, it is happening. And that’s only on one part of one TCIA member’s business.

According to Tony Valenti, president and owner of First Choice Tree Service in Las Vegas, Nevada, chippers are a cornerstone of a new division of his business that began by asking a simple question along the lines of, well, “How can I get some of this business?”

What is the business? It’s called fuel reduction, and it is essentially a state – and to a lesser extent federal – program to reduce fire “fuel,” that is trees and brush that in a forest fire could pose a threat to communities or to firefighting efforts.

As Valenti explains, “Fuel reduction in the western mountain ranges, especially, is a fast growing business.”

Valenti says his piece of the pie was cut simply by asking a question during residential work in the Mt. Charleston area. That led to regular contracts and even some of the so-called economic stimulus money.

First Choice Tree Service actually began with Valenti and a small crew mowing lawns, trimming trees and doing landscaping and irrigation. Deciding to focus on what they did best, the company was formally started in 1989. It has evolved into a full-service tree care firm, with specific focuses in large (and small) tree transplanting using water jet technology, large scale production pruning for hotels and municipalities, high-end residential tree maintenance (large properties up to 500 acres and gated communities) and high-risk tree removal.

About four years ago, Valenti and his company became aware of the state’s fuel reduction program through the Nevada Department of Forestry. While performing tree removal work for private residences in the mountains, he came across a crew doing mountain work for the state and asked how he could get involved. With the company’s general manager taking the lead, next came contact with the state, then meetings and training on pruning and safety according to government specifications. Four years later, First Choice has four to five crews working in different mountains of Southern Nevada pretty much all the time, weather permitting. Valenti has added six new employees for the duration of the contract, and purchased a new chipper to handle the additional American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) workload.

The program is important, Valenti says,
because when done properly, the clearing or “fuel reduction” helps firefighters slow fires down by removing excess growth. Fuel reduction is part of a larger state fire prevention initiative that includes widening roadways to prevent fires from jumping streets, plus what is called “distant pruning,” cutting back fire fuel sources a specified distance from cabins and schools. This creates a “defensible space” by slowing a burn from tinder dry areas where the forest is thick.

“There are areas that, if they catch fire, will run to places where people live. The state will pick a 10- to 11-mile area where we thin the forest so firefighters can stop flames before they get to the public and cannot jump to a small city,” Valenti says.

Regarding the “fuel” itself, Valenti says logs are cut then processed into firewood – its estimated cost per hour or cost per acre. Each state has its own way of doing business.

How do you get to know so you can “cut in” to those contracts? It’s pretty much a question of looking for the opportunity and asking for the business. Assuming one has a computer, there is plenty of information online regarding grants and contract opportunities via the U.S. Forest Service. Check out some of the other federal department sites, such as the U.S. Department of Transportation for road work; there often will be subcontracts required, such as land clearing and right-of-way work in addition to the obvious engineering, grading and paving. Similarly, check out your local state’s Web sites for forestry and other pending contracts.

Another avenue is contacting your local, state and federal legislators. Since they represent you, they’ll have people on staff to further research contract and grant opportunities and, when the time comes, even help with the application process.
ironically – for resale. Regarding the materials that get chipped all day every day, “We recycle about 98 percent of green waste utilizing large dump vehicles and two mulch pens.”

He explains that one is for “clean mulch,” which consists of pure chipped material virtually ready to use immediately after chipping, and the other is for “dirty mulch,” comprised of tough materials such as palm fronds and trunks. This material goes to a large tub grinder for further processing. The mulch is donated to state or federal orchards (such as those maintained by agricultural cooperative extension services), schools, parks and other facilities in and around Las Vegas.

The company owns upwards of a dozen chippers, all in the field every day. Those not in use for fuel reduction are busy with other areas of the business or in support of municipalities, Valenti says. Heavily utilized in the fuel reduction program are Vermeer BC1400 and BC1500 model chippers, he says.

“They have many of the features we need, including safety features. They’re towable, light-weight but rugged for the purpose, complementary to both city and mountain work,” Valenti says. “We’re in the process of looking into track mounted versions for greater versatility on the mountains. Because the chippers run all day, we recognize it’s all about production.” (That end of the business stopped in December and will resume in January as mountain areas become accessible again.)

Valenti advises that one of the major considerations in making a chipper purchase has to do with the local flora. According to Valenti, the mountainous region of America’s west, especially in the Southern Nevada mountain range is unique. “Here you can have a Joshua tree and a hundred yards away a Ponderosa Pine, largely due to quick elevation changes.”

Valenti says some of his work is ongoing and some is the result of federal stimulus money. Getting this kind of work is a matter of getting close to the state (and to a lesser extent federal) forestry offices, he adds. “There’s plenty of this kind of work out there. Plenty in Colorado, Utah and Arizona. It’s heavy there and I suspect in about every state,” he says.

Over the past four years, First Choice has become a preferred vendor for the Nevada Division of Forestry and a state contractor. Such status is based on approval of a state application and ultimately job performance.

It looks as if there will be more to the story, based on the fate of the chipped product coming from those chippers. Valenti says he’s had a lot of conversations and attended seminars and shows to discuss what further can be done, such as burning waste for fuels for schools. To that end, he is awaiting delivery of a waste-to-energy system (for test purposes only) that will be installed at his business. Called “Blue Tower Technology,” it’s an environmentally friendly waste-to-energy technology that can handle any type of input material containing a substantial part...
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Call today at 1-800-733-2622 or visit www.tcia.org to learn more about what TCIA membership can do for your business.
In the past, if the state could not handle a forestry project in Nevada, it may have had to reach out to private contractors requesting a proposal for a job, essentially a bid-type process. Now, agencies get together to determine all their needs, and it may be for seeders, tree fellers or other specialty tree work. Vendors reply with capabilities and costs.

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of organic origin, such as plastics, sewage, wood, biomass, hospital waste, and industry and agricultural waste, resulting in a hydrogen-rich fuel.

Valenti volunteers another attribute that has helped his business grow and actually get more business by promoting it. That is the fact that about six months ago, First Choice Tree Service became fully TCIA accredited. “It was a big deal for our company and our 50 employees. We are proud of that. We have absolutely gotten business because of that, getting into more places to bid.” In some places in Las Vegas Valley, TCIA Accreditation and professional credentials are required to do business, he says, adding, “It’s really been good for us, and wepromo it in our Web site and our newsletters. It’s big part of us.”

According to Chris Faehling, a fire protection officer with the State of Nevada Division of Forestry, the protection program and the federal stimulus funding have proven successful. As with the other states, “The state Division of Forestry works hand in hand with the U.S. Forest Service. We apply each year for federal pass-through grants, which are made available to state agencies.” In the past, he says, if the state could not handle a forestry project, it may have had to reach out to private contractors requesting a proposal for a job, essentially a bid-type process. Now, he says, agencies get together to determine all their needs, and it may be seeders, tree fellers or other specialty tree work. Vendors reply with capabilities and costs.

As an example of the scope of federal funding work, Faehling says there were as many as three large projects underway using stimulus funding. By mid-December, more than 90 percent of the work had been done, some 1,987 acres, creating 32 jobs and retaining five of them.

Helpful Web sites
- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA): www.usda.gov (Look for new initiatives such as the $40 million grant to fight the bark beetle in the western U.S.)
- USDA Stimulus Funding: www.usf-sstimulusgrantsjobs.us
- U.S. Forest Service (part of USDA): www.fs.fed.us (The U.S. Forest Service site can lead you also to regional forestry offices, contacts and ongoing projects and news)
While the technology that drives social media marketing, also known as Web 2.0 or new media marketing, is what gets all of the glory, it is the human interaction that gets results. It is the human or social quality of new media marketing that makes it uniquely effective.

Would you like to hold your own with the technology crowd that is gaga over social media? Not a problem. If you are successful in your business now, then you probably have more skills than most others for taking advantage of social media. It is just a matter of learning how to use them in new ways. Here is a step-by-step process for accomplishing that.

Listen

You should devote at least one-third of your social marketing effort to listening and learning. This gives you a solid knowledge base to support your actions. Start by setting up Google Alerts for terms that are relevant to your brand at www.google.com/alerts. This should include your company name, your personal name and the specific services you offer. Whenever those terms appear on the Web, Google will e-mail you a link so that you can dig deeper, and if necessary, respond to what others are saying. The greatest value of Google Alerts is they keep you in the know about what is happening in the marketplace.

Google will first ask you to sign up for a Gmail address to set up a personal account. I highly recommend doing this because it will become your username for the many valuable services Google offers, either directly or through partners such as YouTube. Choose a username that you are comfortable with and try to use the same one on all of your social media profiles. You can use www.namecheck.com or www.knowem.com to search for username availability across multiple networks.

Personalize

As entrepreneurs, your personal brand is arguably more important than your company brand. The reason for this is the founder, owner or leader strongly influences the culture of the company. These personal qualities and attributes inevitably color your process for serving customers well, and this is invaluable for differentiating your business in crowded markets. Use it to your advantage.

When creating profiles on the social media networks, be sure to start with your personal profiles. This is a social network. Companies do not network, people do. If your entire presence on the social networks is your company logo on a Facebook Fan Page, you have ignored the cardinal rule: It is the human or social quality of new media marketing that makes it uniquely effective. Using traditional marketing practices on the social networks minimizes your ability to achieve results.

If you are going to put a face on your business to encourage personal interaction, the logical question is whose face is best? The business spokesperson doesn’t have to be the leader, just someone who thoroughly understands your business and is willing to engage with prospects, customers and other leaders in the community. Most important is to look for strong character and interpersonal skills.

Engage

Now that you have your social media foundation firmly in place, the engagement process begins. This is where your marketing begins. I use that word carefully because your marketing with social media is more accurately described as relationship and community building that may lead to business opportunities.

Your blog is the cornerstone of your...
social media presence. It is your hub for building valuable content to communicate with your market to build visibility, credibility and, hopefully, generate new referrals. How you accomplish this is very simple: Help solve the most pressing problems your customers have, and you will soon attract new prospects and supporters.

Blogging is purely non-promotional. Your profile and online presence are enough to suggest you are in business for profit. The key is to offer tips and advice, just as you would if you were helping a friend or a neighbor. Use stories to apply your experience in ways that only you can. This is where that human element meets with technology to create a living, breathing, social media marketing machine.

Think of your blog as pulling back the curtain to show your markets who you are and how hard you work to serve them better. This authenticity reveals the good and personal side of your company, just as it revealed the good wizard behind the curtain in the classic film *The Wizard of Oz*.

If blogging is more than you wish to take on at this time, consider micro-blogging. Twitter is one platform to consider, but it is not ideal for beginners because the network is crowded and the level of involvement is not as fluid some of the others. Nearly all of the networks have a micro-blog component today, and this includes Facebook and LinkedIn. Facebook is an informal network where you can engage with your closest friends and customers. Facebook has grown to over 350 million users worldwide, so it is highly likely you will have success there. If you deal more with commercial clients, they may restrict their online presence to LinkedIn, where the environment is more businesslike and professional.

Micro-blogging amounts to posting your current status to these networks. What should you post? I try to give people a slice of what is going on in my life from a professional, social and personal basis. Nobody wants to do business with someone who is all business all the time. Vary your comments. You may wish to share a challenging project your company successfully completed, a book you are currently enjoying, or possibly an upcoming TCIA event you plan on attending.

To multi-task your micro-blogging, get an account at www.ping.fm. This service allows you to update your Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn status simultaneously, along with dozens of others. This is how I make many of my updates. If you wish to learn more, please follow along with me on my blog at www.jeffkorhan.com where I make daily posts to help entrepreneurs like you to take full advantage of this incredibly powerful marketing platform. I look forward to sharing and learning more with you at the Winter Management Conference in Kona next month.

Jeff Korhan is a new media marketer who works with entrepreneurs and small business owners to maximize Web visibility, reputation, and referrals. He will present on this same topic at Winter Management Conference 2010 in Hawaii February 7-11.
Mass Arborists launch state-wide day of service

The Massachusetts Arborists Association recently has launched a new volunteer initiative called Arbor Day of Service. Chris McGinty, MAA president, said that the new program will, “build on the success of our association’s traditional celebration by creating a state-wide volunteer service day on Arbor Day, Friday, April 30, 2010.”

Since 1979, MAA members have come together, annually, as a group to provide much needed tree care at non-profit sites throughout the Commonwealth. Many historically significant sites have benefited from 30 years of MAA volunteerism including The Boston Common, Pilgrim Memorial Park in Plymouth, Mass., and most recently Minuteman National Park in Concord, Mass.

The new Arbor Day of Service initiative will allow members, allied organizations, supplier members and other association partners to donate professional arboriculture services such as tree planting, safety pruning and hazard tree removal that will directly benefit their own communities. The MAA’s membership includes more than 600 professional arborists, including many TCIA members.

“In these days of deep municipal budget cuts, we think we can make a real difference by giving back in our own home towns,” said Dick Stoner, 2010 MAA Arbor Day Committee co-chair.

The MAA has partnered with the Massachusetts Tree Wardens and Foresters Association to identify projects in specific communities that could benefit from professional tree care. From elementary schools and town libraries, to community centers and playgrounds, tree wardens and other community leaders will post their volunteer opportunities and MAA members will use the listing to select their April 30, 2010, projects. The public can visit www.MassArbor.org for introductory information and to register their local project for consideration.

Mike Lueders, incoming MAA president, was among the first people to sign up.

Davey names eco manager

The Davey Tree Expert Company has named Scott Maco to the position of manager of ecosystem services for The Davey Institute. The Institute is the company’s technical services, education and research/development division.

Maco has been heavily involved with the development of i-Tree, i-PED and other environmental services benefits projects.

Maco holds the MS degree in horticulture and agronomy from the University of California, Davis.

Care of Trees, McCullough’s, Embark and Bartlett join HMI

The Bartlett Tree Expert Company, The Care of Trees, McCullough’s Tree Service, Inc. and Embark Tree and Landscape Services have joined Horticultural Asset Management’s Authorized Member Network. HMI provides property owners, insurers and others with inspections, replacement costs and a full suite of claims support services for trees and shrubs. HMI has established a national network of arborists and professional tree care companies to support these products and services.

“Bartlett has worked with us in various capacities since our founding and we are now pleased to count them as a formal member of our AM Network” said Doug Malawsky, executive vice president and COO of HMI. “Their leadership in tree care research, continual training of their employees and an intense client focus makes them ideal Network members.”

“Bartlett has had a long-standing relationship with HMI and we are pleased to continue that,” said Scott Jamieson, vice president with Bartlett. “We have had good opportunities for the development of new client relationships through HMI’s network. We look forward to providing excellent service to HMI’s clients as they work to increase the awareness about the importance of obtaining quality tree care from professional companies.” Bartlett will support HMI’s services through its offices in 27 U.S. states.

The Care of Trees is TCIA accredited and has more than 15 locations serving metropolitan Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C.

“The Care of Trees has been active in supporting not only tree removals, but also consultative services such as cause of loss analysis and risk assessments, said Malawsky. “They have also helped support a program for a large insurance company that HMI recently launched, which was developed to train insurance inspectors to identify failure-prone trees on their clients’ properties.”

“HMI represents a unique opportunity for The Care of Trees to expand our client base and participate in activities that can truly shape our industry,” said Phil Snyder, vice president with Bartlett. “It is consistent with our corporate mission to improve the health and safety of our communities and this will allow us to support our clients in a very unique way.”

(Continued on page 21)
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**Bandit Model 990XP chipper**

Bandit introduced a new 12-inch drum chipper at the TCI EXPO in Baltimore in November. The 990XP is a compact 12-inch diameter capacity drum chipper specifically designed as a high-performance lightweight chipper. The feed system and components are comparable to the popular Model 1090XP, but with a smaller 24-inch diameter drum and a new discharge transition. Engine options are available from most major engine suppliers up to 86 horsepower. To keep this unit compact and to streamline production, option for the 990XP will be limited. The 12-inch diameter Bandit 1090XP is still available, but with a wider availability of options, including engine options up to 142 horsepower. To schedule a demonstration, contact Bandit Industries, Inc. via 1-800-952-0178 or www.banditchippers.com.

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**Jameson Big Mouth Pruner**

Jameson’s new Big Mouth Pruner has a 1 3⁄4-inch hook opening – the largest in the market. Designed for professional arborists, it features an enhanced spring for smoother cutting action, a raised hook edge to reduce blade drag and an easy blade replacement design. The Big Mouth snaps onto Jameson’s fiberglass poles with an adapter that locks into the pole’s heavy duty ferrule. Jameson use forged steel components for added strength. It is available in a double pulley model for increased leverage to reduce required pulling force. All Jameson products are guaranteed for one year. Contact Jameson via 1-800-346-1956, sales@jamesoncorp.com or www.jamesonllc.com.

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Contact Crystal Green via www.crystalgreen.com.

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**Portable Capstan Winch**

Whether you are a forestry worker, a tree care specialist or you simply need to pull loads while away from conventional power sources, the Portable Capstan Winch from Portable Winch will put up to 5,000 pounds of pulling power at your finger tips. This winch, powered by a trouble-free 4-cycle, 50cc Honda engine, delivers 2500 pounds of force single line.

When doubling the line with a snatch block, a force of 5000 pounds is applied to the load. The 110:1 ratio 3-stage gearbox is built with high-strength gear material in a light-weight aluminum housing weighting only 33 pounds. Simply anchor it to a tree, stump or post using the polyester sling, or anchor it to a standard trailer ball up to 2-inch diameter mounted on a vehicle using the optional hitch plate or the receiver hitch attachment. Attach a low-stretch, double-braid polyester rope to the load, wrap it around the capstan drum, start the engine and pull. A complete line of accessories is available at www.portablewinch.com.

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Don Staruk at staruk@tcia.org
Baumalight Stump Blaster

Baumalight designs and sells six models of Stump Blasters for PTO and skid steer connection. The cutting system is designed around a ¾-inch steel rotor; the solid base that provides smooth cutting and momentum when the cutting gets tough. To this are bolted the carbide tipped teeth. The teeth are 1¼-inch long and positioned for greatest chip clearance and cutting performance. Contact Baumalight via 1-866 820-7603, menno@mtbmfg.ca or www.baumalight.com.

Opti-Logic laser rangefinder/hypsometer

Opti-Logic Corporation, a U.S. designer, manufacturer and distributor of laser rangefinders and hypsometers, has recently introduced the versatile and affordable InSight™ LH Series of laser rangefinder/hypsometers. These include models that measure up to 1,000 yards on non-reflective targets and up to 1,500 yards on highly reflective targets. The new InSight LH has five operational modes: Line-of-sight distance, horizontal distance, object height (2 point and 3 point), and vertical angle in percent grade and degrees. Distance measurements are accurate to within 3 feet and angle measurement resolution is 0.1 degrees. Each LH model is user programmable for distance and height measurements in feet, yards or meters. Angle measurements can be displayed in degrees or percent grade. Standard features include a minimum measuring distance of four yards; automatic rain mode to avoid false readings; a “red-dot” aiming system with internal LED display for precise targeting; high quality, durability and more. Each Opti-Logic rangefinder is powered by a single nine-volt battery (supplied). Contact Opti-Logic via (770) 587-5128, mhammel@opti-logic.com or www.opti-logic.com.
Events & Seminar

January 3-4, 2010
2010 Western Annual Meeting and Trade Show
Western Nursery and Landscape
Overland Park, KS
Contact: info@wnla.org; www.wnla.org

January 4-8, 2010
Advanced Landscape Plant IPM PHC Short Course
Dept. of Entomology, University of Maryland
College Park, MD
Contact: (301) 405-3913; akoeiman@umd.edu

January 6-8, 2010
Northern Green Expo+
Minneapolis Convention Center
Minneapolis, MN
Contact: cassie@mnla.biz; (651) 633-4987;
www.northerngreenexpo.org

January 12-14, 2010
Empire State Green Industry Show
Rochester Riverside Convention Center
Rochester, NY
Contact: Jill Cyr 800-873-8873, show@nysta.org

January 13-15, 2010*
2010 Kansas Shade Tree Conference
Ramada Inn, Topeka, KS
Contact: www.kansassharpologist.com

January 14, 2010
EHAP Workshop
Bingham Center, Bingham Farms, MI
Contact: MGIA, Karla Trosen (248) 646-4992

January 24-29, 2010
Mid-Atlantic Horticulture Short Course
The Virginia Horticultural Foundation
Founder’s Inn and Spa, Virginia Beach, VA
Contact: (757) 523-4734; info@mahsc.org;
www.mahsc.org

January 31-February 2, 2010
45th Annual Shade Tree Symposium*
Penn-Del Chapter of ISA (see ad on this page)
Lancaster Host Resort, Lancaster, PA
Contact: E. Wertz (215) 795-0411; www.penndela.org

February 23-26, 2010
ASCA 2010 Consulting Academy
Rohnert Park, CA
Contact: (301) 947-0483; www.asca-consultants.org

Join the Ohio Chapter ISA at the
2010 Ohio Tree Care Conference & Trade Show
February 14-16, 2010
Greater Columbus Convention Center
Columbus, Ohio

Featuring keynote speaker:
Jeremy Barrell, of Barrell Tree Consultancy:
Climate Change and the Emerging Role of Arborists

For more details: 614.771.7494
www.ohiochapterisa.org

Upcoming TCIA webinars

Jan. 13  Tom Tolkacz
What You Should Know About
Buying Another Tree Care Company

Jan. 19  Jennifer Mohlman
Preventing Repetitive Motion
Injuries

Jan. 21  Dave Hineline, CTSP
Walk Away Tree Felling

Jan. 12-14, 2010
Empire State Green Industry Show
Rochester Riverside Convention Center
Rochester, NY
Contact: Jill Cyr 800-873-8873, show@nysta.org

Jan. 14, 2010
EHAP Workshop
Bingham Center, Bingham Farms, MI
Contact: MGIA, Karla Trosen (248) 646-4992

Jan. 26  Laurie Mann
Tree Growth Regulators - Steps to Proper Applications

Feb. 17, 2010
Tree Planting and Installation
Rutgers University Cont. Prof. Education
New Brunswick, NJ
Contact: (732) 932-9271 ext. 648,
www.cpe.rutgers.edu

Feb. 25  Paul Mautz, CTSP
2009 Tree Care Accidents, Injuries and Deaths

February 3-5, 2010
New England Grows*see ad on page 21)
Boston Convention & Exhibition Center
Boston, MA
Contact: (508) 653-3009; www.NewEnglandGrows.org

February 7-11, 2010*
Winter Management Conference 2010
Big Island of Hawaii, HI
Contact: 1-800-733-2622; cyr@tcia.org;
www.tcia.org
**Earlybird deadline to register is January 8!**

February 13, 2010
Long Island Arboricultural Assoc. Annual Tree Conf.
Farmingdale State College, Farmingdale, NY
Contact: Jean Brown (516) 454-6550;
www.longislandarborists.org

February 14-16, 2010
Ohio Tree Care Conference & Trade Show
Greater Columbus Convention Center
Colomubus, OH
Contact: (614) 771-7494; www.ohiochapterisa.org

February 16, 2010
Plant Health Care and Prescription Fertilization
Rutgers University Cont. Prof. Education
New Brunswick, NJ
Contact: (732) 932-9271 ext. 648,
www.cpe.rutgers.edu

February 17, 2010
Tree Planting and Installation
Rutgers University Cont. Prof. Education
New Brunswick, NJ
Contact: (732) 932-9271 ext. 648,
www.cpe.rutgers.edu

February 18, 2010
Hazardous Tree Identification
Rutgers University Cont. Prof. Education
New Brunswick, NJ
Contact: (732) 932-9271 X648; www.cpe.rutgers.edu

February 19, 2010
Municipal Shade Tree Management
Rutgers University Cont. Prof. Education
New Brunswick, NJ
Contact: (732) 932-9271 X648; www.cpe.rutgers.edu

February 25, 2010
Tree Pruning
Rutgers University Cont. Prof. Education
New Brunswick, NJ
Contact: (732) 932-9271 X648; www.cpe.rutgers.edu

February 23-24, 2010
NYSTA Southeast Regional Conference
Holiday Inn Suffern; Suffern, NY
Contact: NYSTA (518) 783-1229

February 25, 2010
ASCA 2010 Consulting Academy
Rohnert Park, CA
Contact: (301) 947-0483; www.asca-consultants.org

**Earlybird deadline to register is January 8!**

Circle 8 on RS Card or visit www.tcia.org
Cutting Edge News

(Continued from page 16)

president of The Care of Trees. “We have certainly appreciated the quality work that HMI has been able to refer to us. I’m also excited about their initiatives aimed at raising the standards for tree care within the insurance industry that will provide qualified and professional companies with an advantage in a competitive environment.”

“We are happy to support HMI’s efforts to promote standards for tree care, as well as tree inspections, as a way to minimize losses from tree failures,” said Ed Schultheis, vice president of Embark. “We recently participated in HMI’s training for local insurance inspectors and it was exciting to see the reaction to HMI’s pre-loss program.”

“HMI’s coverage in Gulf States is critically important to our insurance partners in light of the storm activity that the region experiences.” said Malawsky, noting Embark’s Houston, Texas, location. “We are pleased to count another TCIA accredited company as a member of our network in this important market.”

McCullough’s is based in central Ohio.

“McCullough’s has been in the business for over 30 years and is an accredited tree care company, making it a top tier service provider,” said Malawsky. “McCullough’s is also experiencing growth in this difficult market, which is a testament to their recognized quality of service.”

“We are looking forward to reaping the benefits that HMI offers its members,” said Wess McCullough, owner of McCullough’s. “As an accredited company, we hope to assist HMI, as well as other professional tree care providers, to educate the insurance and consumer markets about the importance of using qualified and professional tree services.”

EDITORS NOTE: Circle 7 on RS Card or visit www.tcia.org
A Region On Ice

The winter storm of ’08 provides a cautionary tale for tree care companies, utilities

By David Rattigan
Last month, the media marked the one-year anniversary of the December 2008 ice storm that socked New England and upstate New York with newspaper and television stories, but most inhabitants of those areas needed little reminder of the storm that crippled the region and left more than a million people without power – some for several days.

For Unitil Corp., a utility company whose coverage area fell right in the epicenter of the storm, much of 2009 was spent rehashing the details of the storm, and the company’s response to it. The company was the subject of public inquiries in both Massachusetts and New Hampshire. Unitil provides gas and electric service to customers in New Hampshire and Massachusetts, and gas service to customers in Maine. Its New Hampshire operations provide electricity to 11 percent of the state’s population.

In November 2009, Massachusetts’ Department of Public Utilities ordered the company to shoulder the cost of a comprehensive management audit “for failing its customers during and after” the storm. The audit could result in additional repercussions, the agency stated.

With a four-community service area, the company is the smallest of four energy providers in the state, and the only one singled out for this kind of scrutiny.

“Unitil was out the longest, they were out two weeks,” says Tim Shevlin, executive director of the Mass. DPU. “Other companies restored power sooner. It occurred to us that there were more problems in the Unitil service area, and (we) looked into that.”

The DPU – which has no authority to levy fines – listed seven areas where the utility company fell short, including planning and training; assessing the damage; poor communication with the public; failure to plan or provide assistance on behalf of Life Support Customers; and, poor judgment in issuing estimated bills to customers whose power had been interrupted (permissible by regulation but adding to customer confusion). Of particular interest for those involved with tree care and line clearance included the citing of a failure to acquire resources that would have allowed the company to restore service more quickly; and the company’s underfunded vegetation management activities, as well as its failure to adhere to the company’s own tree trimming schedule.

On December 8, 2009, The New Hampshire Public Utilities Commission released its final report reviewing the post-storm action of all utility companies, which included more bad news for Unitil. At the time, Debra Howland, PUC executive director, announced that an adjudicative proceeding would commence to examine “specific conclusions that Unitil’s emergency plan was inadequate and that its restoration strategy was inappropriate.”

The company had already conducted a self-assessment, with 28 recommendations for improvement, before the state order. While taking responsibility, it also argued that this was a storm of great magnitude, and its service area – in north-central Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire – was at the storm’s epicenter.

“This was unique,” says Ray Letourneau, director of electric operations for Unitil. “This was an event like no one had ever seen. We had an emergency plan in place, based on the worst event our company had ever seen before.”

But the size of the storm made previous emergencies seem small by comparison.

Shevlin said that while he understood the argument being made by the utility, “The order speaks for itself.”

An extreme case, the ice storm of 2008 can also serve as a case study of how difficult the task can be for those who work in major ice storms, both the utility workers who put the power lines back in place and the tree care workers who clear the way for them. There are hazards, and the 2008 ice storm had them all.

Whacked out of whack

By law, utility companies have an obligation to provide customers with safe and reliable service. That was tested by this ice storm, which began on December 11. According to some reports, it was the worst in a decade (in New England) or two (in New York).

Both Massachusetts and New Hampshire applied for federal disaster relief, and utilities spent millions clearing trees off of fallen power lines and restoring power to homes and businesses. Public Service of New Hampshire, the state’s largest utility with 70 percent of electric

At left, crews work to restore power in Amherst, New Hampshire, in the aftermath of the December 2008 ice storm. Photo courtesy of Travis Warren.

Ice can make the simplest of tasks very difficult. There have been incidents where trucks working with outriggers out and someone in a bucket and have slid on ice. Photo courtesy of Macomb Paynes.
customers, said the cleanup cost $75 million.

Starting on Dec. 11, the convergence of rain with freezing temperatures created a storm that was much worse than forecast, and conditions worsened with the arrival of a snowstorm days later – when the cleanup was continuing and some were still without power.

“Nobody expected that the impact of this storm to be quite so devastating,” Mayor Konstantina Lukes of Worcester, Mass., told The Boston Globe. “Trees are falling on cars, they are falling on houses, and they are trapping people in their homes.”

Almost a week after the storm, more than 100,000 customers in Massachusetts were reportedly without power, affecting the holiday shopping season and crippling the business and transportation of many northeast cities for days.

At one point, all 28,500 customers in Unitil’s four-municipality service territory (Fitchburg, Lunenburg, Townsend and Ashby) in Massachusetts lost power. Some customers did not have electricity restored until December 25.

Utility companies routinely get their manpower from two sources – neighboring utility companies that provide mutual aid to help repair power lines and get the power back on, and contracted tree care companies to clear the way and cut away trees that fall on power lines.

In the case of the ice storm, mutual aid arrived, but with a storm footprint that extended into upstate New York, it did not come quickly. Utilities had to solve their own problems before helping their neighbors.

“We’ve had ice storms before, but the difference was just the breadth of the event,” Letourneau says. “It involved an incredibly large geographic area.”

Asplundh, the company contracted for tree clearance, was sending workers from as far away as Pennsylvania. Getting from Pennsylvania to central Massachusetts was a slow trek.

“The hardest part of that storm was getting around,” recalls Letourneau, who says he was very happy with the contractors’ work.

The trouble with access around the area led to difficulties assessing the damage, and a third problem came with a snowstorm that hit a few days into the ice storm. Unlike a hurricane, which hits for a day or two and then moves on, winter weather events seem often to be followed by more weather events, as was the case with that storm.

“The first night was incredible, but then it continued for several days,” Letourneau says. “The stuff kept falling.”

The damage assessments took longer than expected, and concluded that “virtually every portion of the overhead system required repair or replacement.”

Based on customer messages to its interactive voice response system, customers reported 1,032 wires down, 364 trees on wires, 243 “loud bangs” and 86 broken poles.

While it was a unique event, the storm put emergency workers up against all of the obstacles they often deal with in ice storms. There was cold weather that made work slow, darkness, concerns about safety from falling trees, live wires, and generators backfeeding electricity into the system.

They had to find places to stay, and food. They followed 18-hour days with other 18-hour days, fighting fatigue. Hypothermia is also an issue workers need to be cautious of. Bob Rouse, vice president for industry standards for the Tree Care Industry Association, says that all of these obstacles are those that workers deal with whenever there’s a large-scale ice storm.

Tree care companies are experienced and skilled at marshalling resources and getting workers to storm sites, although...
traveling to the area can be difficult, and traveling within the area can be difficult as teams wait for the local DPWs to clean roads. (Depending on what’s authorized.)

Once at the site, they need to guard against multiple hazards, notably electricity.

“There are all kinds of intrinsic hazards,” Rouse says, one of the most important being to be sure that there’s no current running through power lines. “You need to verify that electricity’s off, and there are always concerns about backfeed electricity coming from private generators that may not be properly installed. Any time there’s a wire down, you’re looking at what else might conduct it (such as a) fence or guard rails. This is an ongoing concern they have to be aware of. “Everybody wants their electricity on, but it can’t be done until it can be done safely.”

Poor access, poor footing, and the obstruction of the snow itself can be only part of the problem. Darkness can be an issue as well.

“The work itself is slow and tedious. With the ice and darkness and cold, everything is kind of a drag on efficiency,” Rouse says. “Sometimes they’ll bring portable lighting, or some trucks are equipped with some lighting and they’ll try to keep working as long as they can. All of those things make it take longer.”

Workers are trained specifically for these types of events, including electrical hazards awareness training. Skilled crews are important, because of the difficulties of working on ice.

“There have been incidents where trucks are working, with outriggers out, on solid ground, with someone in a bucket, and have slid on ice. Even in that position,” Rouse says. “If something like that can happen, it gives you an insight into how hazardous this type of work is, and how much the ice can slow you down.”

Making changes

Among the areas to hurt Unitil in the eyes of the regulators was a finding that it had cut back on its own tree-trimming schedule because of budgetary issues. Unitil argued that it couldn’t be faulted when healthy trees nearby (but out of its jurisdiction) fell across power lines, but the situation left them vulnerable.

Shevlin notes that the practice of trimming branches that might impede the path of wires hanging along a road are specifically in place to prevent contact that could lead to outages. “I can’t say specifically that the failure to adhere to a more vigorous tree trimming program was the proximate cause of the outage,” Shevlin says. “It was a contributing cause, but not the final determinant.”

The director agreed that many of the lines were knocked out when trees from outside the utility’s area of control fell onto power lines.

As Letourneau says, “When a completely healthy tree falls over, it doesn’t matter how much money you’re spending on vegetation management, you’re not stopping that tree.”

And downed trees and power-line poles all over the region were two things workers ran into over and over again. “We had healthy oaks and healthy maples coming down,” Letourneau says.

Unitil has already implemented some recommendations from its self-assessment, making improvements in its operations, communications and other areas.

“Most have been implemented, and we’re working on the rest right now,” Letourneau says. “We’re better prepared. Should another event like that occur, we’re confident we’ll be in position to respond. We’ll be able to do some things that we didn’t have available to us in the past.”

No matter the results of the audit, Unitil has already learned some lessons from the storm. Notably, says Letourneau, “Don’t ever underestimate Mother Nature.”
Whether one is a commercial motor vehicle driver or owner, or the de facto fleet manager, tree care company owners and managers are essential participants in FMCSA’s Comprehensive Safety Analysis 2010 (CSA 2010) initiative to reduce motor vehicle crashes and fatalities.

CSA 2010 replaces SafeStat with a new Safety Measurement System (SMS) that measures the previous two years of roadside violations and crash data. With SMS, every inspection counts, not just out-of-service violations, and both driver and carrier safety performance are monitored.

The CSA 2010 Operational Model is the new way FMCSA and its state partners will carry out the compliance and enforcement programs. The CSA 2010 Operational Model is characterized by (1) a more comprehensive measurement system, (2) a proposed safety fitness determination methodology that is based on performance data, and (3) a comprehensive intervention process designed to more efficiently and effectively correct safety problems.

The Behavioral Analysis and Safety Improvement Categories, or BASICs, are seven categories of safety behaviors measured in the Safety Measurement System (SMS). The BASICs represent behaviors that can lead to crashes: unsafe driving, fatigued driving (hours-of-service), driver fitness, controlled substances and alcohol, vehicle maintenance, and cargo related; and crash history. The Carrier SMS uses a motor carrier’s data from roadside inspections, including all safety-based violations, State reported crashes, and the Federal motor carrier census to score and rank carriers in each BASIC.

Higher scores will cause a motor carrier to enter, or remain in the pool of carriers with deficient BASICs. Increased scores may make a carrier subject to more severe interventions.

There are six important differences between the new Safety Measurement System (SMS) and the Agency’s current measurement system, SafeStat:

- SMS is organized by seven specific behaviors (BASICs) while SafeStat is organized into four broad Safety Evaluation Areas (SEAs).
- SMS identifies safety performance problems to determine the intervention level while SafeStat identifies carriers for a compliance review.
- SMS emphasizes on-road performance using all safety-based inspection violations while SafeStat uses only out-of-service and selected moving violations.
- SMS uses risk-based violation weightings while SafeStat does not.
- SMS will eventually be used to propose adverse safety fitness determination based on a carrier’s own data while SafeStat has no impact on an entity’s safety fitness rating.
- SMS includes two distinct safety measurement system, carriers and drives, while SafeStat assesses only carriers.

CSA 2010 is currently being tested in six states: Colorado, Georgia, Missouri, Montana, Minnesota and New Jersey. It encompasses about 50 percent of the carriers and government resources in each State. In summer 2010, the program will launch in the remaining states.

TCIA can help you tune up your operation before CSA arrives in your area. TCIA has a Management Guide, available for free to its members, to help you meet Federal Motor Carrier regulations. And, enrolling in the TCIA Accreditation program can help you get your DOT requirements in order.

Peter Gerstenberger is senior advisor for safety, compliance & standards for the Tree Care Industry Association.
Bad info on ALB in Mass.

I am writing about an article in the November 2009 issue of Tree Care Industry Magazine, “ALB leads to imidacloprid battle in Mass.,” in the Tree News Digest section. The article is of interest to the ALB eradication program, particularly because there are some errors cited within, and because the USDA was not contacted for input or comment.

I’d like to address the following items, and am hoping you might be able to help us clarify:

Reference to “spray” – The ALB Eradication Program does not spray insecticides. The two application methods used by the program are both direct applications, 1) trunk injection, and 2) soil injection.

Treatment applications for ALB eradication are under the direction of the USDA Animal Plant Health Inspection Service, not the “Forest Service” as indicated.

The injections taking place this fall were part of a fall treatment pilot study, during which selected trees were treated for two days in September, and two days in November. You can find more information about the pilot online at www.aphis.usda.gov/newsroom/content/2009/09/albmafall.shtml.

Reference to France & Germany – France banned the use of the imidacloprid as a seed treatment for sunflowers and corn because preliminary data suggested potential harm to bees. This ban remains in effect even though other studies do not consistently support the preliminary findings. Despite the ban, no improvement in bee colony health was observed in France. Germany suspended the use of a number of seed treatment pesticides following a bee-kill incident. But after investigating the factors contributing to the situation, Germany lifted all of the suspensions, with the exception of using clothianidin as a seed treatment for corn.

Please do reach out to the program if ever there is a need to clarify information or our activities. You and your writers can contact me directly, and my contact information is included below. The program understands SafeLawns’ concerns, and has had interaction with Board member Peter Wild, founder of ArborJet.

Rhonda Santos,
Public Affairs,
USDA-APHIS-LPA-ALB

Editor’s note: I have egg, or ALB frass, on my face. We excerpted information for that brief from a press release and several published reports. Obviously, we did a poor job with it. We will try to do better going forward. – Don Staruk

TCIA names Lincoln its Legislator of the Year for 2009

The TCIA Board of Directors recently voted Sen. Blanche Lincoln (D-AR) the TCIA Legislator of the Year. Lincoln is the new chair of the Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee. She currently chairs the Subcommittee on Rural Revitalization, Conservation, Forestry and Credit, which has jurisdiction over the US Forest Service, but will have to give up that post as the chair of the entire committee. She is also a member of the powerful Senate Finance Committee and serves as a member of its Subcommittee on Energy, Natural Resources, and Infrastructure.

In 2009, Lincoln took a very public and politically risky stand against the Employee Free Choice Act (EFCA), legislation that would end secret ballots in union organizing elections. For a Democrat, she has a business friendly scorecard, rating 71 percent from US Chamber of Commerce, and 75 percent from the National Federation of Independent Businesses in the last session of Congress.

In addition, like TCIA, Lincoln supported Comprehensive Immigration Reform in 2006 (voting for S. 2611), and she has shown support for H-2B visas, including favorable votes in 2005 and as co-sponsor of the legislation in 2007.

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TCIA exists to help tree care businesses, you do business better. TCI Magazine is one of the ways we do that.

Q. What can you do to help us maintain our position as the best magazine in the tree care industry?
A. Fill out a subscription card for your FREE subscription every year. (in every issue, and on this issue’s cover wrap)

Q. Why?
A. It costs money to publish a high-quality magazine. Advertising support enables us to provide you the highest quality educational, scientific, business and safety articles.

Q. How does filling out a subscription card help?
A. Advertisers look at the number of subscribers who request the magazine by filling out a card. To them, it means people are reading it.

Q. What if you don’t fill it out?
A. We don’t look as attractive to advertisers and they may not support the magazine, and the quality of the magazine suffers. Also, after three years you’ll be dropped from the list.

Q. How often should you fill out the card?
A. Once a year would be best. Directly requesting the magazine is the best way you can show advertisers that you are actually reading the magazine. Doing so every year shows them that you are reading it regularly. We show them those numbers.

Q. So, will filling out the card once a year help TCIA keep you informed in countless ways that will benefit your career and your business?
A. Yes.

Q. Can we make it any clearer?
A. You tell us.
Man hurt as bucket truck arm collapses

A Framingham, Massachusetts, man was in good condition at a Boston hospital November 2, 2009, after falling from a bucket truck while pruning trees at a residence in Holliston, Mass. Brian Brackett, 47, was flown by MedFlight helicopter to the hospital after the boom on the aerial lift truck failed. The lifting arm broke at the joint, sending the bucket he was working in crashing to the ground, according to the MetroWest Daily News.

Brackett was pruning a row of pine trees lining the driveway for his father’s landscaping company. The daughter of the homeowner said she was inside when the accident happened and didn’t come outside until she saw emergency vehicles. She said that she was told Brackett had jumped out of the bucket as it was falling to avoid being crushed.

Federal OSHA conducted an investigation. The American National Standards Institute mandates that bucket trucks be inspected annually by a qualified inspector. The truck that failed was a 1980s-model.

Submitted by Barbara Mulhern.

Worker Injured in fall from Redwood

A tree trimmer fell 40 feet from a redwood tree in Monte Rio, California, November 3, 2009. The 42-year-old man was flown by medical helicopter to Santa Rosa Memorial Hospital. His name and the extent of his injuries weren’t available, according to The Press Democrat. Rescuers were not sure how he fell, as his safety belt was still on. He appeared to have fallen straight down on his feet, and then slid onto his back, according to one safety official.

Submitted by Paul M. Mautz, CTSP, Southfield, Michigan.

Tree Trimmer dies after fall

A man who fell 20 to 30 feet while cutting a tree in Harwich, Massachusetts, November 4, 2009, died from his injuries after he was flown to a Boston hospital. Kerry Connors, 58, of Dennis, fell from either a ladder or the tree and was conscious and lying on the ground when rescue crews arrived, according to the Cape Cod Times. He died within a few hours of the accident.*

Worker killed in struck-by

A 26-year-old man working with a tree service company to cut down a tree in Allentown, Pennsylvania, was fatally injured November 4, 2009, when a heavy tree limb fell on his head. Christopher Rhudy of Topton, Berks County, was hit as he stood beneath the bucket of an aerial lift while the other worker was sawing a piece of the tree, according to The Morning Call.

Rhudy was taken to Lehigh Valley Hospital-Cedar Crest, where he was pronounced dead.*

Park employee killed in struck-by

A state park maintenance worker performing trail maintenance was killed November 4, 2009, when a tree fell on him at a park in Manalapan, Monmouth County, New Jersey. The 36-year-old man was one of two maintenance employees cutting down a tree on which a dead tree had fallen at Monmouth Battlefield State Park in Manalapan. The dead tree fell, striking the one worker on the head, according to www.nj.com.*

Man killed trimming tree with dad

A California, Kentucky, man was killed November 8, 2009, in a tree-trimming accident on his family’s farm. James Allen “Jimmy” Kelley, 41, was trimming a tree with his father when the tree kicked back, pinning him between the tree and a backhoe, according to The Enquirer and news.cincinnati.com. He died at the scene. His wife and their four children survive him.*

Two tree trimmers shot, one dies

Two tree trimmers were shot, one fatally, November 09, 2009, in West Palm Beach, Florida, victims of an apparent robbery attempt. The two contract workers were trimming trees along power lines behind a home when the homeowner saw one fall from a ladder about 3:20 p.m. When deputies arrived, they realized it wasn’t an electrocution, but a shooting, and a second man was also wounded. He was taken to St. Mary’s Medical Center where he was in critical condition, according to The Palm Beach Post.

Two men approached the workers in the back yard, an altercation took place and shots were fired, according to witness
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One or more employees enroll in the program to become your organization’s internal safety trainer(s). They have up to 18 months to complete a study guide with exercises, attend a workshop and pass the certification test.

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- Control at-risk behaviors to reduce accidents and associated costs
- Improve customers’ perception of your professionalism through your commitment to safety
- Improve employee morale, productivity, retention and recruitment
- Offer a rewarding new career path for key employees

NEW - TCIA member companies with CTSPs on staff are eligible to be considered for workers’ comp coverage under the new ArborMAX insurance program.

The results are in.
TCIA Member companies with employees enrolled in the Certified Treecare Safety Professional program are ten times less likely to experience a lost workday incident compared with members that do not have a CTSP on staff.

Additionally, members with employees enrolled in the CTSP program are nearly four times less likely to experience a recordable accident (one that requires medical attention beyond treatment in the field) than members without a CTSP on staff.

The numbers don’t lie... safety-conscious tree care companies that get involved with the CTSP program experience fewer accidents, fewer injuries, and less lost time.

— PERIOD.

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In conjunction with NJAISA
Garden State Tree Conference

March 30-31
Boylston, MA
Tower Hill Botanic Garden

July 21-22
Chicago, IL
In conjunction with ISA Annual Conference

Aug. 18-19
Arcadia (Los Angeles), CA
Mauget Facility

Nov. 9-10
Pittsburgh, PA
In conjunction with TCI EXPO

The CTSP Workshop is the last step in the certification process. Learn more and enroll at tcia.org

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There are at least two sides to most every position and the question of the need for an industry-wide decay inspection standard is no exception. Decay inspections are performed in many different work situations in the tree care industry, such as during pre-climbing or work routines, sales calls for new or existing clients, in tree inventories or during formal risk assessments. These various situations may have different inspection processes for level of detail, interpretation and communication of result, and regarding the need for further inspection.

Currently, there are no specific industry standards (i.e. American National Standards Institute, or ANSI, or otherwise) for either tree risk or for decay inspection. (Photo 1) Guidelines in ANSI Z133.1 (ANSI, 2006) recommend inspecting a tree before work commences and considering the potential impact of decay when cutting a stem, but no specifics are provided with these general recommendations. The International Society of Arboriculture recently published a Tree Risk Assessment CD as part of their educational series (ISA, 2008). Neither of these could be construed as providing standards for decay inspection.

A tree risk assessment standard is being worked on by TCIA’s ANSI-accredited A300 Standards Committee (www.tcia.org/standards/PINS/Part9.pdf). In anticipation of this ANSI A300 release, the ISA has established a tree risk best management practices committee. However, tree risk and decay assessment are related but different topics both in procedure and outcome. Establishment of a risk assessment standard is likely to be considerably more complex than a single-factor standard such as decay assessment. Risk assessment involves multiple factors such as target, site, past history, load analysis, additional testing, remediation, re-inspection and reporting among other factors.

In many cases, initial decay inspection may prompt a more detailed risk assessment. Full risk assessments are seldom used when arborists are simply working in a tree, or when sales calls are being made. But recognizing the presence of decay and conducting an initial inspection of its severity are often needed in both these sales and working situations. This brief article will therefore just look at the question of the need for an industry-wide decay inspection standard.

The argument for a standard
Is there a need for some standardized assessment practices for trees with decay or suspected of having decay? On the “yes” side of this question are some strong arguments.

A standard could specify what is expect-
ed of an arborist doing decay assessments in different work-type categories such as a sales call, or a pre-climbing inspection, tree inventories or even within a formal tree risk assessment.

A standard would help establish the type of inspection, level of detail and communication of result that would be expected in these various work categories. (Photo 2) This would benefit arborists working in each setting as it would establish what they are expected to do if decay is encountered or suspected.

Another strong argument for a standard inspection procedure is that, after an initial inspection, it could help establish the responsibility of an arborist in identifying the need for additional assessment procedures.

Most decay inspection procedures, such as use of decay detecting tools, root crown inspections for root decay, aerial inspections for decay or pull-testing, are not typically performed in sales calls, pre-climbing work inspections or even some risk inspections. A decay inspection standard would clearly define an arborist’s role in identifying the need and conducting the use of more advanced assessments. (Photo 3) One possible outcome is to transfer the burden for the final decision on more advanced testing back to the tree owner or manager. The arborist would be responsible for notifying the owner or manager of the inspection results and explaining the potential need for such testing.

An argument could also be made that setting a standard would help the industry in legal situations by establishing the inspection procedures that an arborist has the duty to employ in different inspection settings.

Currently, the lack of any accepted standard inspection procedure can place an undesired and often unrealized burden on working arborists when detailed inspections (for example the use of decay detecting tools) are suggested as the norm in legal or other matters. Legal matters are complex, but a standard could help identify more clearly the arborist’s role in decay assessment.

The presence of a standard could also help clarify the limits of a general decay inspection (i.e. an inspection without the use of advanced techniques or procedures, although simple probing and sounding may be part of a general inspection).

There are a number of situations where decay cannot be adequately assessed in a general inspection. For example:

- where internal decay is not visible and cannot be assessed by sounding or probing,
- where root decay is present, or
- where decay is high enough in the tree that it cannot be adequately inspected from the ground.

The limitations of a general decay inspection could be established in a standard to help reduce legal exposure in the cases where decay is hidden or cannot be inspected adequately.

The arguments against a standard

The argument against an industry-wide inspection standard follows similar lines as the arguments for it, except that the reasons are reversed.

Establishing a standard places a burden on arborists, particularly if an accident occurs and standard inspection practices were not applied.

This could be a concern where hidden defects exist, such as root decay, or where subtle symptoms of the decay were overlooked. Furthermore, arborists less experienced in decay assessment would be burdened by doing inspections with which they are not comfortable or for which they are not trained or experienced. (Photo 4)

One could argue that the arborist is the expert on the property and that the need for any inspection and for additional testing of decay in a tree is the decision of the arborist as consequence of their presence.

Tree owners or managers routinely have no knowledge of when additional decay assessment is needed, and current practices that allow the arborist discretion on when, where and how to evaluate decay are adequate.

Probably the strongest argument against a decay testing standard is what to do with any information gathered in a general or more advanced decay inspection.

There is little agreement in the industry (i.e. see Bond 2006) on what amounts of
decay trigger specific action, such as pruning, cabling or removal. In most cases where decay is present it is not severe (Luley 2009). Establishing acceptable action thresholds for each situation where decay might be a concern (for example, roots, butts, trunks, crotches or branches) while also accounting for tree species, decay fungus interactions and external factors such as exposure to wind, seems highly unlikely. Uncontested research on which to base these decisive recommendations does not exist for the most part. Therefore, if the information obtained during an inspection does not allow a conclusive recommendation based on standard guidelines, why require an inspection procedure to obtain this information? (Photo 5)

**Conclusion**

I suggest that if a decay inspection standard were viewed industry wide simply as a means to ensure that an inspection was conducted and basic practices followed, many of the arguments against a standard could be minimized. Since there is little research or industry agreement on action thresholds, it would seem unreasonable to try and establish them. Professional judgment would still prevail as it currently does in most cases.

A standard could help the industry in defining what is expected of an arborist in various work situations. This would be a significant step in helping arborists better define their role when interacting with clients, when preparing to assess or work in trees with decay, and in legal matters...
Court Upholds Tree Ordinance in New Jersey

By Lew Bloch

The Supreme Court of New Jersey recently handed down a unanimous decision that will have a very positive effect, nationally, in our arboriculture community. They virtually gave credence to local municipal tree preservation ordinances. Up to now, the news has been quite dismal because the trial court of New Jersey had ruled against such a local ordinance and the appellate had upheld this lower court decision.

Jackson Township in 2003, under its police powers, enacted an ordinance to address adverse effects of tree removals on private property, intended to protect the environment and promote health safety and the general well-being of the inhabitants. The process involved applying for a permit to the township forester followed by a review by the shade tree commission and others. Any tree over 6 inches in diameter that is to be removed must be replaced based upon size, or pay a replacement fee. This also involved construction sites and allowed for trees to be replaced on or off site (usually on government land) or a cash payment could be made. Similar ordinances are in effect all over the country.

In 2004, New Jersey Shore Builders Company sued Jackson Township and, as stated above, the trial court held that the ordinance was invalid. The appellate division affirmed that decision, but the Supreme Court of New Jersey, in case 193 N.J. 586 (2008), unanimously held that the ordinance was a valid exercise of police powers.

This decision is obviously important to the Jackson Township community and the State of New Jersey, but it is equally important nationally as it will add credence and precedent to the legality of these tree preservation ordinances.

However, this is the real world and many of us know or have heard of developers who, when told the fine would be, for example, $10,000 if he does not protect the trees, would just ask, in advance, who to make the check out to. In other words, they do not want to spend the money for tree protection that may or may not work, and instead just adds the cost of the fine to the cost of the project as a cost of doing business.

Perhaps, just perhaps, if these fines were based on an appraisal using The Trunk Formula Method as described in The Guide for Plant Appraisal, written by The Council of Tree and Landscape Appraisers, instead of some of the municipal methods of appraisal, the fines would be more meaningful, substantial and realistic. Just perhaps!

Lew Bloch, registered consulting arborist and author of “Tree Law Cases in the USA,” lives in Potomac, Maryland.

where inspection procedures are often challenged.

References

Christopher J. Luley, Ph.D., is a vice president and pathologist with Urban Forestry LLC. He is a member of the ISA Best Management Practices committee for Tree Risk Assessment and does research on decay inspection in urban trees. This article is based on his presentation at TCI EXPO ’09 in Baltimore, “Testing Trees for Decay.”

Please circle 5 on Reader Service Card
The Atlanta Botanical Gardens are several acres of native mixed hardwoods located in the heart of this major metropolis. As visitors enter, they are swept into a new phase known as the Southern Seasons Garden. This world-class addition opened last April already known for year-round blossoms from a variety of plant and tree species, including camellia, hydrangea and trillium. These understory gems are protected by what the Gardens refers to as a “cathedral” of towering oaks, beeches and tulip poplars that are 80 to 100 years old. In addition to this spectacular example of Southeast gardening, visitors can enjoy constantly changing art exhibits on display under these trees.

When the Gardens recently decided to expand visitors’ ability to enjoy nature, their number one goal was a commitment to the trees. In order to achieve this goal they looked no further than Atlanta’s own Arborguard Tree Specialists. Arborguard, a TCIA member since 1981 and accredited since 2007 (the first company in Georgia to achieve that credential), was selected because of work they previously performed for the Botanical Gardens and their reputation for quality service in the region. Spence Rosenfeld, Arborguard president and former TCIA Board member, knew the project would be challenging and would require creative solutions to protect the trees in a very crowded construction site. Along with the Southern Seasons Garden

*Visitors to the Promenade Walkway in the Atlanta Botanical Gardens’ Southern Seasons Garden would have no idea about the amount of work involved in preserving its trees.*

*Profiles in Arboriculture*

*Tree Preservation Southern Style*
project there were a new parking deck and visitor center under construction; this meant a flood of workers and equipment. “Softening the construction impact and compaction were really big concerns,” Rosenfeld says.

According to Rosenfeld, the planning and coordination process took the better part of a year, and the conceptual design took even longer. Arborguard was fortunate to be able to add input from the beginning. They met with the construction team and landscape architects many times to help design specifications that incorporated best management practices for protecting trees. “We were able to introduce some great concepts, such as root bridges, into the design that really made a positive effect,” Rosenfeld explains.

Some of the biggest changes to the plan were related to the walkways and road grades, not making cuts too deep or applying to much fill. Arborguard used a product called Stalite that is a compactible fill material. It allows fill to be placed over a root system and compacted for a road or walkway bed without damaging the soil profile, so that it retains the ability to exchange gas or water. Numerous pathways had to be created throughout the Gardens to meet ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) standards using mulch and also asphalt on grade. A combination of Stalite over geotextile fabric, or a commercial landscape mix that included Stalite, was used to protect and preserve the root zones as these paths were built.

To manage all of the foot and equipment traffic, Arborguard created corridors for travel. As many as 100 Alturnamats ground protection pads were used to protect the root zones, and branches were constantly being tied back to allow passage of larger equipment through tight areas. Concrete for paths was delivered into those really tight areas by a remote controlled concrete buggy that could deliver its payload into the forest with much less impact that a traditional concrete truck. Machines with tracks were preferred to those with tires, as tracks spread the machines weight out over a larger area, making a shallower footprint.

Also very important was communication with the equipment operators. Rosenfeld says this became quite difficult as the project came to a close and people began to rush. “It was a challenge to enforce our protection measures as everyone panicked during the three weeks leading up to the grand opening. We became the tree police,” he recounts, adding, “In the end, everything worked out and the job was well done.”

Arborguard used an Air-spade soil excavation tool in conjunction with precision root pruning to prepare the root zones for the installation of new irrigation and utility lines. One of the neatest things they did during the year-long project, Rosenfeld says, was “using the Air-spade to tunnel under a 30-inch root flare of a tree in the heart of the project to install a major utility line, in essence saving a large specimen tree.” The air excavation tool was also used
to expose and prune root systems of mature trees in preparation for the installation of camellias.

In explaining how crews remained motivated to stay safe and productive on a long project, Rosenfeld says, “we were honored and privileged to be a part of a great vision and surrounded by such a positive atmosphere.” The crews were divided up by specialty, they worked hard with zero accidents, and they had fun, he says. Jonathan McNeil, CTSP and director of operations for Arborguard, and arborist Brendan Gill, CTSP, did a great job leading weekly and special needs safety meetings. Rosenfeld says he is “still thrilled when I think about the job everyone did and the outcome; safety was such a challenge with all of the people and construction equipment in such a tight space.”

For the climbers on the crew, it was a dream job: mature hardwood pruning, especially the 52-inch dbh tulip poplar that was pruned to make room for an upcoming project. More than 95 percent of the pruning was climbing work; a bucket truck could not get into the woods. There was some crane work, mainly removals on the periphery. When a crane was needed in the
forest for tree work or installation of some large pieces of art, it was a compact, 40-ton all terrain crane with articulating wheels.

The Southern Seasons Garden project was a success because of the Atlanta Botanical Gardens’ commitment to trees and Arborguard’s knowledge of and experience with the preservation of trees. In recognition of this, Arborguard in November was awarded the Georgia Urban Forestry Council’s 2009 Outstanding Urban Arboriculture Award for their work on this project. In addition, they will also be working on the second phase of expansion at the Garden.

This second phase, known as the Canopy Walk, will be a 12-foot walkway suspended up to 40 feet in the air on steel cables connected to four large steel masts. It wanders through the canopy of the mature hardwoods to give visitors a unique perspective of the beauty of the trees. We are guessing air excavation will not play a big role with part two of this project.

At right, before and after views of a curb wall, with the change in grade for the roadway evident.
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When you work in the tree care industry, you have to be agile in more ways than one.

Patrick and Tana Bryant, for example, started The Bryant Tree Expert Company in Salem, Oregon in 1983 – in the middle of a recession – as a tree care, spray and landscape maintenance business. They eventually eliminated the maintenance and spray segments, which weren’t adding value to the company, and purchased two tree services companies and a landscape installation company.

Buying the tree services companies allowed them to increase their sales to the two companies’ existing customers, says Tana, who runs the office and organizes the safety training for the company. Adding the landscape installation company allowed them to balance out their slow summer period and sell landscape services to their tree care customers, who already knew and trusted them.

“We figured, if we were already on the property and they needed other services, we might as well be the ones to pick up that project.”

Pat, Tana’s husband, is the mainstay of the business, she says. He was the first commercial certified arborist in Salem, and one of the first in the area.

The company has belonged to TCIA since 1991. It earned TCIA Accreditation September 23, 2009 – the fifth company in Oregon to achieve the credential.

“We were doing pretty much everything we needed to do to become accredited before we started,” Tana says. “We were doing pretty much everything we needed to do to become accredited before we started,” Tana says. “The Accreditation process validated it all. It also helped streamline our systems.”

Approximately 85 percent of the company’s business is tree work, and about 75 percent of that is pruning. Another 10 percent is tree removal and most of the balance is tree consulting. About 85 percent of their business is residential work.

Pat takes care of all the sales for the company. He also spends time on job training and working with the crews. They have nine employees, including six tree workers – which allows them to run two to three crews – two landscape installation employees and an office assistant.

“We have never hired just a body for the job,” Tana says. “Our employees are our business, because they represent who we are.”

The Accreditation process took six to eight months, off and on, to complete. For her, the most time-consuming part was the paperwork, especially making sure the employee files were complete. “It was eye-opening, all the detail that went into it,” she says.

Before they became accredited, they often had problems finding key employees. Now, they can tell in a much shorter time if new employees will work out. “I’m interested in employees who want to learn and gain new skills,” she says, “and the Accreditation process provides very clear standards on safety and tree care. If they aren’t willing to follow the standards, I know very quickly they aren’t interested in the work or keeping a job.”

She had every employee – even the ones who’d been working in the industry for years – go through TCIA’s Tree Care Academy Apprentice program, so they all had access to the same information. Also, thanks to what they learned in the Accreditation program, the company has implemented ongoing training with the Tree Care Academy, from apprentice to tree care specialist. Some employees are also working on becoming certified arborists through ISA.

Employees want to be part of a company that spends time and money training them to move up in the industry, pays a living wage, and provides health insurance, vacation pay and a 401(k), Tana says. These high standards allow the company to attract and keep employees who are efficient and well-trained.

The hardest part of the Accreditation process for Pat was to change the way he’d been writing pruning specifications for 25 years and follow the ANSI A300 (Part I) format. It took a while to retrain their employees and customers, too, but now the
process is much clearer and more precise. Potential customers can evaluate the specs for themselves, or show them to other tree companies so everyone is comparing apples to apples, he says. It helps educate the customers and other companies, as well.

“When I go to a sales call, people often don’t know what they want or need,” Pat says. “I go through the process: how trees grow and respond to pruning, why I’m giving the recommendations. This is mostly so owners don’t damage their tree, which costs them money in the long run.”

And this is a way the company is different from many others, he says. “More than anything, I feel like we’re not really in business. It feels more like we’re taking care of people’s trees and we just have to trade money to do it. It’s still a lot of work. You start talking to someone and the last thing you think of is money.”

Not surprisingly, a lot of their business comes from referrals and repeat business. They also get clients through the yellow pages, via the Internet, at trade, remodeling, yard & garden and home shows, and through associations and chambers of commerce. It may take some time before clients and potential clients recognize the significance of Accreditation, Tana says, but she says she believes it will help with marketing.

“We have very high standards and we’re ethical,” she says. “We take care of our customers. You can say that as much as you want, but Accreditation backs it up.”

Although they had a business plan before going through the Accreditation program, they were inspired to change it because of what they learned, she says. “We’re working on a full company operations book. It contains all of the systems it takes to run our company, so you can open the book and have steps that tell you, for example, how we answer the phone, or handle the banking, or what the steps are for the sales person. That way we don’t waste time telling every new employee what to do. They can just open the book and read the steps that it takes to do the job. It reduces mistakes and a lot of questions.”

And five years from now?

“In five years, I think we’ll have grown to another plateau,” Tana says. “We move forward, and sometimes we move back. Right now, we’ve moved back a level, with downsizing our crews and expenses. Since the economy has changed, so have our plans. Still, even in bad times we have plenty of opportunity to grow our business. We even have a company that has spoken to us about (buying) our business because they want to expand into the area. But we think we have a little more growing to do ourselves – or maybe we aren’t ready to let go of something that we enjoy so much.”
Serious business is on the agenda at the Hilton Waikoloa in Hawaii next month with the highest caliber speakers, industry panels, poolside peer forums, working breakfasts and other networking opportunities all with one focus – helping you run a successful tree care business.

After the formal education sessions end each morning, productive informal learning exchanges fill the rest of the days and evenings. The most popular semi-structured gatherings are the poolside forums, where attendees share information, successes and challenges on specific topics. The schedule this year – generating a buzz to get everyone selling for you, an open forum with TCIA’s Board of Directors, employee safety challenges, and attracting and retaining affluent customers – will no doubt start lively discussions that will continue throughout the conference.

There are also awards to be won, a political action committee auction to bid at, a golf tournament to benefit students of arboriculture, a special gathering for first and second timers to meet their future networking mentors… and all the activities you imagine will delight about Hawaii. Visit the volcano park, watch the sun set aboard a catamaran, learn the hula, get up close and personal with the island’s whales, ride horses or ATVs, gaze at the stars from one of the world’s largest telescopes, visit a working coffee farm, drop a fishing line in 6,000-foot-deep water, or curl up under the palms and relax!

Whatever you do with your afternoons and evenings, rest assured the mornings will be filled with valuable business education and the entire week will be filled with networking that is friendly, low-key and essential for the success of your business in 2010.

Join us in Kona, February 7-11, 2010 for the best business-to-business, owner-to-owner networking opportunity in tree care. We kept the registration price the same for the fourth straight year, and room rates start at $209, or $239 for an ocean view room. Call 1-800-733-2622 or go to tcia.org to view the entire conference program and register online.
TCEXPO 2009 in Baltimore was a success in many ways, not the least of which was that it held its own in the midst of the economic downturn of the last two years.

While Baltimore has always been a good location for EXPO, nothing was certain going into this show. Yet look at the numbers:

- Attendance of 2,200-plus bested 2004 and 2005 in Detroit and Columbus respectively, and beat last year’s show in Milwaukee;
- Not a single exhibitor expressed disappointment, in fact, many said it was their best

But there were other firsts at TCEXPO 2009 as well.

The first TCEXPO Accreditation Forum was deemed a success, as was the A300 Open Forum. Both of these will be held again, in 2010 in Pittsburgh.

The CPR/First Aid Train the Trainer sessions were an unqualified success, and will also likely be scheduled again for next year. Word of mouth by the second day generated a lot of interest in the program.

The Opening Reception hosted by Vermeer was, as always, well attended, as were the Member Forums.

The two newest TCIA products were the hottest sellers at the show: The new book, “Managing Insects and Mites on Woody Plants: An IPM Approach” by John A. Davidson and Michael Raupp; and the Tree Care Academy “Tree Care Safety Specialist.”

The winners of the New Member Raffle, who received a pair of Midland Walkie-Talkies, were Jason and Elizabeth Coulter, owners of Colt Tree Service of Camdenton, Missouri.

Winner of the other Member Drawing was Maritza Rodriguez, vice president and office manager of Arborcare, Inc. in Hileah, Florida, who received a Pentax Optio P70 digital camera.

We’ll be expecting some great pics of her working crews to put in Reporter and TCI Magazine, and on www.tcia.org, or from Hawaii if she makes it to Winter Management Conference this February!

(Continued on page 44)
The only downfall was the weather, which was absolutely gorgeous for seeing the sites in Baltimore and for the student career days climbing events – but rain usually brings even more local tree workers into the show!

Planning for next year’s TCI EXPO trade show and conference, to be held in Pittsburgh, Pa., November 11-13, 2010, is already under way. See you in Pittsburgh!

TCI EXPO
(Continued from page 43)

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Scott Jamieson was one of many folks to whom Cynthia Mills bid goodbye at EXPO. The last day of the show was her last with TCIA.

Mark Garvin, from left, Mary DiCarlo of the Tree Fund, and Gene Bridges and Dawn Cook of Bandit Industries, with the chipper Bandit donated for auction by the Tree Fund at EXPO. Peter Sortwell of Arborwell was high bidder.

Want info on insurance, including Workers’ Comp?

At TCIA’s invitation, a number of ArborMAX agents will help TCIA staff our exhibits at regional trade shows. Shows scheduled so far at which you will be able to meet and talk with an ArborMax rep at our booth include:

- **Northern Green Expo**
  Jan. 6-8, Minneapolis, MN

- **Connecticut Tree Protective Assoc.**
  Jan. 21, Farmington, CT

- **New England Grows**
  Feb. 3-5, Boston, MA

- **Winter Management Conference**
  February 7-11, 2010, HI

- **Ohio Tree Care Conference**
  Feb. 14-16, Columbus, OH

Agents will explain how the ArborMAX program can benefit TCIA members, giving tree care companies a chance to hear first hand about the benefits of the program.

For more information or other shows, contact David Lee, director of membership, at (603) 314-5380 or lee@tcia.org.
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www.tcia.org
Inmate dies cutting trees
A state inmate being held in a local detention center died November 11, 2009, in an accident while on work detail in Jessamine County, Kentucky. John Michael Hager, 35, of Jessamine County, was part of a crew of inmates clearing brush near the Kentucky River. Hager was using a chainsaw to cut a tree when the tree split, fell onto some branches, then bounced back and fell onto him. Hager was pronounced dead at the scene, according to the Lexington Herald-Leader and www.kentucky.com.

Hager was one of four inmates, along with a supervisor and state road workers, who were working at the scene.*

Tree trimmer electrocuted
A tree trimmer was killed in Rogers, Arkansas, November 12, 2009, when he was electrocuted while trimming trees near Beaver Lake.

Philip Vilella, 42, died instantly when his upper body apparently touched a power line, according to a WXTV Channel 15 report. Vilella was in a utility bucket 25 to 30 feet high when he touched a main distribution line for the neighborhood where he was working.

Rescuers had to wait about 15 minutes for power to be shut off before they could lower the bucket to assess and try to assist Vilella, according to KSFM Channel 5.

Man dies while cutting down tree
James White was working with his son, Jerry, to cut down trees at a home in Jeffersonville, Kentucky, November 13, 2009, when a tree fell back on James, killing him. Jerry White says his father typically cut down trees and would use the wood to heat his home or sell it, according to WKYT-TV. White died of blunt force trauma.

Landscaper killed in chain saw accident
A landscaper was killed in Bethesda, Maryland, November 14, 2009, in an apparent chain saw accident.

Witnesses told police that the man lost control of the saw while on a ladder trimming a tree branch, according to The Washington Post.

The man, 35 years old, was injured in the upper body and fell from the ladder. Investigators estimated that the man was 30 feet up when he fell.

Homeowner injured trimming branches
Jerry Hutchinson of Liverpool Township, Ohio, was injured while reportedly attempting to trim branches from a tree on his property with a chainsaw November 14, 2009. A branch fell on top of him, knocking him off of his ladder.

Hutchinson fell approximately 15 feet to the ground. Life-team medics were dispatched to the scene at which time Hutchinson was unconscious due to serious injuries, according to The Review. Hutchinson was transported to a Pittsburgh hospital by helicopter.*

Man killed by felled tree
James Kiebler of Washington Township, Pennsylvania, died after a partially fallen tree he was cutting along a road in Washington Township November 14, 2009, fell back and slammed him to the ground.

Kiebler died of asphyxiation. Rescue crews had to drive all-terrain vehicles and a pickup truck along a narrow dirt path to get to the accident site, according to wpix.com.*

Bucket truck tips, injuring worker
A county tree worker was injured November 16, 2009, after a bucket truck fell onto its side in Fairfield Township, Ohio, with him in the bucket. Aaron Broughton was conscious when taken to the hospital but complaining of hip and shoulder soreness. The truck rolled onto the passenger side, with the fully extended bucket landing roughly 15 feet from a home’s front porch. Broughton was part of a seven-person tree trimming crew that was parked and cutting limbs at the time.

Broughton fell roughly 30 feet inside the fully extended bucket after the outriggers on the truck apparently slipped, according to The Oxford Press.*

Man injured by felled tree
An Ohio man was critically injured November 16, 2009, when a tree he was attempting to cut down fell on him. Andrew W. Beck, 28, of Lower Salem, Ohio, was transported by medical helicopter to Ruby Memorial Hospital in Morgantown after the incident.

Beck and another man were cutting trees for firewood on Beck’s family property, according to The Marietta Times. He was cutting a tree that was 16 to 18 inches in diameter and was attempting to cut it so it would fall downhill, but the tree fell uphill.

Beck was unconscious when rescuers arrived and did not regain consciousness while being treated at the scene. He sustained injuries to his head and had suspected internal injuries.

Worker hurt by felled tree
A New Hampshire tree worker was injured November 16, 2009, while removing a white pine after the 25-foot top he’d cut got caught in a nearby tree and rolled, its butt hitting him. The worker was about 30 feet up in the tree. The butt of the section struck his chest and abdomen and ripped his shirt off as it came loose, leaving him with bruised ribs, internal bruising, a badly sprained ankle, cuts and scrapes.

“I let myself get side tracked thinking about the new ground man and getting the job done. Production isn’t everything! I could be dead right now, but fortunately I am just sore and have to take a couple of days off. All I would have had to do was take the tree it got hung in first! I sure did give the wife and kids quite a scare,” the worker wrote on www.treebuzz.com.*
2009, when a tree he was taking down fell on him in unincorporated Stanwood. The man, reportedly employed as a private contractor with a logging and tree service company, was doing storm cleanup work in a heavily wooded area on private property, according to the Seattle Times.

The man was using a chain saw to bring down an unstable tree that had fallen and was partially suspended by the branches of nearby trees when a large section of the unstable tree fell on him. He died at the scene. A man working with him was not hurt.

Falling limb kills transportation worker

A state Department of Transportation worker and father of two from Forks, Washington, died November 19, 2009, after a tree branch fell on him while he was helping to clear another tree that had fallen on a roadside. Neal Richards, 42, was pronounced dead at the scene shortly after the branch hit him, according to the Peninsula Daily News.

Richards, a maintenance lead technician, and five other transportation workers were removing a fallen tree on the side of U.S. Highway 101, about 11 miles west of Port Angeles, Washington. Richards was using a chain saw to cut up a fallen tree when a branch from another tree came loose and hit him. It was unclear why the branch from the other tree fell. The fallen tree was not resting on that branch, and it remained unknown if it was knocked loose by the tree when it fell.

Homeowner killed in struck-by

A Norwell, Massachusetts, man died November 21, 2009, as a result of a tree-cutting accident at his home. Scott Wilson, 42, was cutting down a large tree in his yard when the tree fell suddenly, knocking down another tree, which fell on him. Wilson was wearing a helmet, but was badly injured. An ambulance transported Wilson to South Shore Hospital, where he was pronounced dead on arrival, according to the Metro West Daily News.*

Homeowner killed by felled tree

A Liverpool, New York, man died November 21, 2009, after the tree he was cutting down at his home fell on him.

Lynn M. Perry, 67, was home alone when he was cutting down the tree. A family member found Perry unconscious, according to The Post-Standard.

Fire Department members lifted the tree off of Perry, who suffered a traumatic upper body injury. Perry was taken by ambulance to Upstate University Hospital, where he was pronounced dead.


Teen killed in wood chipper incident

A Poquoson, Virginia, teen died November 22, 2009, when he was pulled into a wood chipper. Frank Anthony Gornick, 14, was working with a tree and lawn care service crew doing tree trimming and using a chipper when the incident occurred, according to WAVY.com and fox43tv.com. Gornick was apparently shoveling debris into the back of the chipper, when the shovel he was using got caught in the blades and somehow pulled him into the machine. Gornick died at the scene.

See more accidents for this month at www.tcia.org under the Safety tab. Send local accident reports to editor@tcia.org.

* Submitted by Paul M. Mautz, CTSP, Southfield, Michigan.
Chased From a Tree By a Raccoon

By Tim Epperson

‘H’ope that coon’s not rabid,” I heard big Al holler from below – his voice obviously anticipating a long to be recounted misadventure in which I was now unwittingly embroiled. Looking down the trunk of the tree in which I had been working for the last half hour I saw it – a pretty good sized raccoon warily making his way up the trunk toward me. He appeared to be groggy which would have fit the fact that it was winter and we had probably awakened the creature from it’s slumber.

I had seen the large knothole while spiking up the tree and thought about probing it to determine the degree of hollow, but since Al and I had already decided to lower the larger sections of the tree using a like-sized tree nearby – in order to avoid the stockade fence and dense stand of dogwoods directly beneath – I had figured a probe to be a waste of time. After all, any weight to be shipped would easily be handled by the strong crotches of the white oak about 20 feet to my rear, into which I had placed a lowering line. Working quickly because of the cold, the first couple of branches were successfully lowered – the last having collided with the main trunk below, which is probably what awakened the animal and caused it to emerge from its hole.

So here I was, about 60 or so feet up in the multi-forked crown of a 90- to 100-foot poplar looking down at a raccoon about 30 feet below slowly making its way toward me. My first reaction was to holler and clap my hands, thinking this might stop the advancing coon; and for a moment I thought it might work as the creature paused, turned slightly and looked down. But there on the ground was big Al chortling at the situation and enjoying every minute of my dilemma. Al’s sense of what’s funny often borders on the outer edge of what most people would find humorous – but a better work partner and friend would be hard to find.

Anyway, it was clear the raccoon had chosen to go up and away from Al and all my hollering and clapping had failed to convince him to turn around. I remembered that I had heard tales of climbers getting pretty scratched up by coons, and that the name itself has something to do with the Indian word meaning “little bear.” This plus the fact that should this thing bite me a series of rabies shots was in my immediate future. I thought briefly about letting it get close enough to slash at it with my speed saw, but figured if I didn’t knock it out of the tree it would become dangerously enraged. Therefore I quickly determined that I would be the one to get out of that tree – not the coon.

Rappelling down didn’t seem an option as that would have closed the gap between the animal and me and at some point the creature’s primal defense instincts would have kicked in and he would probably attack. I found myself wishing I was safely in another tree, and it occurred to me that if I could just get a hold of the lowering line in the oak to my rear and tie-on, then I could belay myself between the canopies of the two trees and get out of harms way. The lowering line however was a little more than 20 feet away and, because the dense growth of underlying dogwoods prevented Al from tying the lowering line back onto my climbing line after receiving a cut limb; he had been “looping” the rope toward me as I reached out with an expandable rope-snagging tool called a Sidekick to capture it and bring it to me.

Trying to disguise my increasing level of panic, I hollered to Al to swing me the lowering line, which – after one failed attempt due to dogwood interference – he managed to get just close enough to me to stretch out and hook with the tool.

With one eye on the raccoon, now only about 15 feet from me, I believe I may have set a record for the quickest tie-on in history. Thankfully, Big Al did just as quick a job of tying-off the down side end and I was able to breathe a sigh of relief as I simply belayed myself out into the open space between the two canopies and eventually down to sweet mother earth, leaving the raccoon to its kingdom.

To this day big Al loves telling the story of the day a raccoon chased his “wimpy” partner from the job (which we finished another day), but I don’t mind. In retrospect it probably was funny, but my advice to other climbers is, don’t ever spike past a knot hole without investigating – there could be a surprise in there.

Tim Epperson is a retired arborist living in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

TCI will pay $100 for published “From the Field” articles. Submissions become the property of TCI and are subject to editing for grammar, style and length. Entries must include the name of a company and a contact person. Send to: Tree Care Industry, 136 Harvey Road, Suite 101, Londonderry, NH 03053, or editor@tcia.org.
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