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Outlook

It’s the Right Time ...

My parents taught me some life lessons that continue to serve me well every day. They revolve heavily around actions that show respect when interacting with other people, while preserving your own self-respect. Things like first impressions matter; if you’re going to accept a gift, you’re going to thank the person in writing or it will be returned; look into someone’s eyes when you speak to them and have a firm handshake; live by the Golden Rule; we’re all children of God; and remember to say please and thank you. So I’m honoring my parents and you today with this article. It’s time to say “THANK YOU.”

As I write today, we have members in Louisiana who conducted business in Slidell, New Orleans, Lake Charles, Baton Rouge, Breaux Bridge, Church Point, Haughton, Jefferson, Monroe, and St. Martinville, who are devastated by Hurricane Katrina. We have a member in Ocean Springs, Miss., right next door to Gulfport. We have members in Mobile, Silverhill, and Lillian, Ala., all on the Gulf Coast. Some may have lost their businesses and their homes. Those who did not will be involved in rebuilding their communities for years. Part of our family is hurting terribly right now and desperately needs us.

Another part of our family are heroes in the making. Members will be responding from all over the United States to help restore power, clear away debris, help homeowners, and provide some glimmers of hope in the middle of devastation that is too large to grasp. I have no doubt, because of who I know you are, that many of you will be providing other kinds of assistance along the way, simply because you’ll be there, and you have hearts as big as you have skills to get the job done.

You see, long before I met you in person, I was the beneficiary of your kindness – from all over the country. John and I were smack in the middle of Hurricane Hugo. I can honestly tell you that neither of us has been so scared before or since. The sound that the TV played from inside the Super Dome matches the freight train we thought was coming through our house. No one expected 120 mile per hour winds in Charlotte, so we didn’t evacuate. The scene following is still hard to describe. The contractor next door to us had two years of work in less than 48 hours and stopped making estimates. We were lucky – no damage to our home; just unbelievable amounts of debris in our yard.

Yet the psychological challenges of living for weeks with no power; wondering where to get the next bag of ice; how long was the food going to hold out; and when would it be safe to get on the road to find out were huge. Even then, before home PCs and PDAs, the loss of connectivity and estrangement from the daily world was staggering.

In the middle of the silence following the storm, the sound of chain saws grew louder and louder around the city. It became such a constant that the local disc jockeys made up a song about “CHAINSAAWWWWWWSSSSSS” to the tune of “RAWHIIIIIDDEEEEE!!” My point is – you were there. You were there with all your skill sets, competencies, calmness, dedication, and determination to help us get back to normal. You were there to care, to assure us that power would be restored, and that our roads would be safe again. You were there to remove enormous trees that left us with a question mark as to whether we could stake our future pride on our City of Trees claim. And you stayed until the job was done.

In the news over the last few weeks, the EMTs, doctors and nurses, National Guard, not-for-profits that provide food and shelter, and the hotels and motels that step in to assist will have their praises sung publicly. You – perhaps not so much. You will be there – many of you for months on end. You will hear from tired and weary people who in the stress of their losses have also lost their civility – and understandably so. You will work in some of the most dangerous conditions that tree care professionals can encounter. You will work terribly long hours – though with safety utmost as its first consideration, please. You will be present. You will be skilled and tireless.

And today, you will be publicly thanked. Godspeed.

Cynthia Mills, CAE
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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Please circle 5 on Reader Service Card
At Asplundh Tree Expert Co., safety is good business because working safely is simply the right thing to do. Safety is one of our core values. This may be a simple statement, but during my recent travels in both landfall arenas of Hurricane Katrina, I have seen with my own eyes how a sense of “doing the right thing” has made a dramatic impact in our company’s safety culture.

At the height of our storm response, we had more than 5,000 personnel and their associated equipment on station both in Florida and the Gulf Coast doing what they do best – helping the utilities get the lights back on. Many of these crews are still on storm work and will remain so until the job is finished.

This was my first “tree storm” with Asplundh because in a previous life I was a safety supervisor for a major utility in St. Louis. Being on the contractor side of the business is a little different from the utility side, but I must say that in this particular storm, I witnessed so much pride in our employees that it probably, by itself, could rebuild the Superdome in New Orleans. I witnessed our employees sleeping in camping gear they brought with them, in their trucks, and then finally in “comfortable” tent cities. Their spirits are upbeat despite being away from their families for weeks stacked one after another. The sheer number of trucks (of all kinds) lined-up at the staging areas is impressive and at first it takes your breath away because of the seemingly orchestra-like movement in which everything happens. There is a special pride in this industry, and I’m honored and humbled to be part of it.

As of this writing in mid September, we are still in heavy response-mode in various parts of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and the panhandle of Florida. Our hearts go out to the millions of fellow-Americans impacted by this cataclysmic event. To top off what has already occurred, at this point, the 2005 hurricane season is not even close to being over. The potential for injury to the victims remains huge; similarly, the exposure for injury to our employees and other response personnel is extremely great. I’m pleased, however, to report that to date we have had only a few minor injuries. There are many reasons for this kind of success – I will discuss two.

I’m confident that the following reasons, which are working today, will continue to work as we move forward: (1) Safety Awareness; and (2) Employee Involvement. Again, some simple statements, but let me give you some examples of each.

First, safety awareness. The safety team that has accompanied the troops to both Florida and the Gulf Coast hold nightly conference calls. These calls have approxi-
mately 60 to 80 people on them every night—some managers and even upper executives; but mostly our safety team. We discuss the day’s events, hot safety topics, any injuries or near-misses, and then we provide at least five safety talking points that are communicated to 100 percent of our employees the next morning before they leave their “show-up” site. The talking points range from proper roadside set up, to holding proper job briefings prior to commencing work at each work location, to environmental hazards such as spiders, snakes and bees. The meetings are held in the language of the employees—sometimes both Spanish and English.

Secondly, employee involvement. As part of our growing safety culture, we encourage our employees to get involved with various aspects of their safety. This involvement includes helping the foreperson and all crew members identify hazards at each job location, actively participating during the job briefings, coming up with ideas to raise safety awareness, and only performing their tasks when everyone on the crew believes it is safe to do so. During our conference calls, we have heard multiple times that our crews have refused to remove or trim a danger tree until the utility verified that the conductors were de-energized and grounded. Of course some work is performed “hot,” but when the only safe way to trim is when the line is dead, our employees are “doing the right thing” and making the situation as safe as it can be.

How is all of this possible? The answer—management’s commitment. Our management staff, from President Scott Asplundh down to every general foreperson in the field, is committed to our vision: “Safety...
First ... No One Gets Hurt.” I believe that our employees can feel the spirit behind these words.

Are we perfect? Have we actually achieved this vision? Not yet, but we’re close. As I mentioned earlier, we still had a few minor injuries. Of course our employees didn’t come to these storm-stricken areas to get injured; nobody wants to get hurt. But I believe that because the vision is clear, our company will do whatever it takes to ensure everyone goes home the same way they came. To this end, this demonstrated commitment helps our employees make the right choices because our vision and values are clear. It really makes our safety performance easier – and that’s good business.

Gil Niedenthal, CSP, CIH, is director and corporate safety officer for Asplundh Tree Expert Co.
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The large-scale destruction wreaked by Hurricane Katrina along the Gulf Coast will require cleanup and reconstruction. Resources from all over the country, and even from foreign countries, will be drawn upon to participate in that work – and workers’ compensation issues will arise if companies participate in this work. Each state has different rules pertaining to workers’ compensation. Employers are recommended to comply with the WC laws of those states, to prevent legal issues, coverage issues and premium issues in that regard. Following are some area to be aware of.

1. Firms will become subject to the WC laws of those states when they begin to do work there, through their employees and their subcontractors.

2. Those laws require employers to secure the payment of WC benefits to or for their employees, and the employees of their uninsured subcontractors, who may be injured in the course of their work there. Security has to be in the form of a standard WC policy issued by an authorized carrier, or through a license by the state to self-insure. There is no “opt-out” provision for employers in the WC laws of these states, such as the “non-subscriber option” in Texas. Other forms of insurance, such as Occupational Accident policies issued by some accident and health carriers, do not qualify as legal security.

3. Employees from other states may become entitled to benefits under the WC laws of the states where they actually perform work, just like employees residing locally in those states. Failure to have secured the payment of those benefits under a WC policy may subject the employer to a suit for unlimited damages by the injured employee or his dependents.

4. The WC laws of these states do not exempt workers who may be present and working illegally under U.S. immigration laws. Employers who fail to secure the payment of WC benefits to such workers may be just as subject to civil and criminal penalties as with U.S. citizens or legal residents.

5. To certify that an employer is in compliance with the WC laws of a state, insurers should file Proof-of-Coverage certificates with the state when informed that the employer expects to perform work in the state. They do not need to file Proof-of-Coverage certificates with states named in Item 3C “Other States Coverage” of the policy. Failure to have proof of coverage on file with the state can make the employer subject to civil and criminal penalties.

6. A lot of damage has been done to waterfront facilities in these states. Cleanup and restoration work in those areas may be subject to the U.S. Longshore and Harbor Workers Act. Employers that do work subject to that Act must secure their obligations with USL&H insurance, or self-insurance approved by the U.S. Department of Labor. A Proof-of-Coverage filing by the insurer with the Department of Labor is required. Failing to insure and file can subject the employer to very severe federal criminal and civil penalties.

7. To obtain work, contractors or subcontractors are generally required to present a Certificate of Insurance. Insurers should not authorize anyone to issue such certificates on their behalf for an employer with respect to a job in a state, unless that state is shown in, or has been added by endorsement to, Item 3A of the Information Page of the policy.
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The Landscaper’s Companion is now available in easy-to-use 8 ounce foil packs and in bulk 5 and 15 pound E-z Pails. It can be used on deciduous trees, evergreens, shrubs, and landscaping materials, including annuals, perennials, vegetables, baskets, pots and sod. Ideally, it is used during the planting process or incorporated into the soil for general maintenance of existing landscaped areas. It contains all of the high quality ingredients contained in liquid Landscaper’s Companion, but in granular form. Each pound contains 64 billion colony-forming units of bacillus, a beneficial and prolific rhizosphere bacterium. Other ingredients include kelp extract, 17 natural L-amino acids, humic acid, and a natural wetting agent. It also benefits from Growth Products’ slow-release nitrogen from Nitro-30, which avoids unwanted surge growth. With 25 percent Vitera Gelscape included, a water-control polymer gel, The Landscaper’s Companion will improve the soil’s ability to absorb and hold water, gradually releasing moisture between waterings. Contact Growth Products at 1-800-648-7626 or via www.growthproducts.com.

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Blue Ox introduces loader trailers

Blue Ox Equipment (BOE) has introduced its “on road,” multi-functional log loader trailers. Built tough and with the highest quality construction, their I-beam main frame allows better stress resistance and no moisture build up. Dump trailers are manufactured with scissor action dumping, giving a sturdier and more stable dumping performance. The Big Ox combo loader and trailer has a 20,000 GVW with dual tandem axles, with an 18-foot 5-inch long loading bed. The Lil Ox combo loader and trailer has a 14,000 GVW, with single wheel tandem axles and a 14-foot loading bed. The 1700HD loader, standard on Big Ox & Lil Ox, has a 17 foot reach, 48-inch grapple, seat and ladder. The 2100XL provides an optional upgrade to a 20-foot 8-inch reach. Blue Ox loaders provide greater versatility, stronger lift and longer reach. Contact Blue Ox at info@blueoxequipment.com or call (802) 467-1055.

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Buckingham Arborlite Model 1890 saddle

Fashioned after its popular Master II saddle, Buckingham Manufacturing Company’s new Arborlite Model 1890 weighs in at only 3.5 pounds. The newly redesigned Quick Connect Buckle provides an unmatched level of confidence, adjustment and fit, and heat sealed foam back and leg pads add to overall comfort. Other features include step-in friction-buckle leg straps, six tie-in loops for overhead suspension, medium-size, work-positioning D-rings, and side-mounted tightening buckles. Three gear loops, multiple accessory rings and a mini carabiner are also included to suspend a hand saw, duty bags or blood stopper pouch. Contact Buckingham at 1-800-937-BUCK [2825] or visit www.buckinghammfg.com.

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ImpleMax modular grapple attachment line

ImpleMax Equipment Co., Inc. has an all new, redesigned grapple system that uses a modular component configuration to allow users with a full range of choices in designs. Any of the new SmartGrapple designs can be fit to skidders and front-end loaders using a variety of quick-attach systems, as well as tractor three-point hitches. According to Will Callahan, president of ImpleMax, “The SmartGrapple system provides choices to customize a grapple attachment to get the best design that fits the jobs you do and way you work. With the right product on the job, expenses like fuel and labor go down and profits go up.” Today, material-handling requirements can vary significantly depending on the type of work tree care companies do. The SmartGrapple can be configured with simple gravity rotation and manual hydraulics, all the way up to full 360 degree hydraulic rotation, with electro-hydraulic controls integrated seamlessly into an operators cab controls. The SmartGrapple can be simple, or so advanced that ImpleMax can actually fine-tune the way the hydraulics behave to an operator’s preference. With these and other options, such as winches, there are literally hundreds of different configurations to choose from. Contact ImpleMax Equipment Co., Inc. at 1-800-587-6656 or via www.implemax.com.

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**Aazel Series 1 Universal Saw Head**

Aazel Corporation’s new Series 1 Universal Saw Head is designed to fit 1, 1 1/8, 1 ¼, 1 3/8, or 1 ½ fiber-glass, aluminum, or wood poles (comes with the adapter to accommodate the snap button pole ends). The Series 1 is designed to work with their 1C, 1D, or the new 1G adjustable saw blades, providing more than 10 true locking angles. It will also accommodate the shorter non-adjustable saw blades manufactured by others. Its design is slightly heavier than other models, which is not noticeable until you start to saw over head and you realize the added weight actually aides in cutting quicker with less effort. They also have packaged our Series 1 with different blades, sectional or telescopic aluminum and fiberglass poles, all made in the U.S.A., at special pricing. Contact Aazel at www.aazelcorp.com.

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**Onset leaf wetness smart sensor**

Onset Computer Corporation’s new Leaf Wetness Smart Sensor is a new plug-and-play sensor for the company’s HOBO Weather Stations. Designed to emulate the surface of a leaf, the Smart Sensor provides accurate leaf wetness data in a number of growing and research applications. For example, it can help growers determine the proper time for applying fungicides, and help researchers understand the impact of leaf moisture on plant disease. Key features include an embedded sensor design that eliminates the need for painting the sensor before using; a capacitive grid technology that provides resistance to surface residues from chemicals, dust and other contaminants; a plug-in, modular connector that enables easy connection to HOBO Weather Stations; and an adjustable mounting bracket that enables the sensor to be easily positioned to mimic the wet-dry characteristics of the plants being studied. The sensor is preconditioned to maximize long-term measurement consistency, and works with Onset’s 15-channel HOBO Weather Station and 4-channel HOBO Micro Station. The sensor sells for $99. Contact Onset at www.onsetcomp.com/hobo.

Please circle 195 on Reader Service Card
New Care of Trees CFO versed in acquisition restructuring

Michelle B. Leissner, a certified public accountant with nearly 15 years of experience, has been named chief financial officer of The Care of Trees. Among the positions she held before joining The Care of Trees was director of finance for Pactiv’s North America Protective Packaging Division, where her duties included integrating three acquisitions and centralizing the finance function.

“Michelle is poised to play a key role at The Care of Trees as we continue to grow nationally through mergers and acquisitions,” said Scott Jamieson, president and CEO of The Care of Trees. “She has the depth of experience in financial management and planning and the leadership skills that will help enhance our position in the marketplace.”

Leissner spent three years at Solo Cup Company, first as director of analysis and accounting, then as vice president of finance, before becoming part of The Care of Trees team. Her duties included heading the finance-integration team following the acquisition of Sweetheart Cup Company, a move that made Solo Cup a $2.2 billion company. She also restructured the accounting and financial analysis departments, resulting in more effective and efficient operations.

Leissner began her career at Price Waterhouse LLC, where she was among few staff accountants selected for early promotion to senior accountant after two years. She went on to lead financial operations for companies ranging from $100 million to $850 million in revenues. She has a bachelor of business administration degree in accounting from the University of Michigan and is a member of the Illinois CPA Society. She is also an active volunteer with the Les Turner ALS foundation.

RedMax Names Production Compliance Safety Manager

Matthew Wilson has joined RedMax/Komatsu Zenoah America Inc. as production compliance safety manager. In the newly created position, Wilson will be responsible for engine emissions compliance. Wilson brings to RedMax more than 15 years of outdoor power equipment experience, and has been active in the EETC since its formation in 1997. After serving in dealer positions, Wilson joined Tanaka as product and then Maruyama as technical services manager.

Recently, Wilson moved from the Seattle, Wash., area to the Atlanta, Ga., area where RedMax/Komatsu Zenoah America is headquartered.

Shindaiwa recall

In voluntary cooperation with the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, Shindaiwa is recalling certain model DH231 and HT231 professional hedge trimmers due to the possibility of fire. Heat from the muffler of these units can cause distortion of the fuel tank, which could damage the tank and create a fire hazard. Shindaiwa is aware of 10 fuel leaks involving two small fires. As a result, model DH231 and HT231 hedge trimmers with serial numbers prior to 505000 are subject to the recall. Contact your dealer immediately about obtaining the new fuel tank/heat shield assembly. When your dealer tells you that the tank/heat shield assemblies are in stock, bring your DH231 or HT231 hedge trimmer to the dealer and a new tank and heat shield will be installed at no charge. The dealer will destroy the old tank. If you have any questions, you may contact the Shindaiwa Technical Service line at 800-521-7733, extension 630.

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As FMCSA gets ready to start enforcing Hours of Service (HOS), we are happy to relate that most of TCIA’s non-line clearance members may be eligible for some regulatory relief through other provisions. The so-called short haul provision, the 100 air-mile provision and the 16 hour exception are explained at the end of this article.

On Aug. 10, President Bush signed into law the transportation bill (H.R. 3 - Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users or ‘SAFETEA-LU’) containing an exemption for drivers of utility service vehicles (USVs) from the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) HOS regulations.

For over two years, TCIA in partnership with Edison Electric Institute (EEI) has been actively seeking an “Hours of Service” (HOS) exemption for our industry. We are happy to announce that EEI’s HOS Coalition has succeeded in gaining inclusion of “utility service vehicles” in the HOS exemption.

During this process, some of our members have asked a very valid question: “Will FMCSA consider our vehicles to be utility service vehicles for the purposes of enforcement?” The answer is “yes.” In fact, FMCSA made that determination over a year ago. EEI Counsel Rick Schweitzer quotes a 2004 FMCSA Hours of Service Enforcement Guidance memo as follows:

“One additional good point is that the FMCSA states unequivocally that ‘contractors working for a utility are operators of utility service vehicles.’” Schweitzer goes on to say, “The FMCSA added that this definition includes ‘contractors providing services such as tree trimming when the contractor is performing those operations in furtherance of maintaining power lines, etc.’ There has been some question of whether contractors would be included in the USV driver definition, and this resolves the issue. Moreover, this means that the provisions for a permanent exemption for USV drivers in the highway bill would also cover contractors, as that legislative language also refers to the definition in 49 CFR §395.2.”

The bill prohibits states from enacting or enforcing HOS rules against utilities. The exemption was “effective immediately” upon signature by the President but we want to caution line clearance contractors that the system(s) you work on will only be clearly exempt when federal and state motor carrier agencies act upon the exemption granted by Congress.

The HOS exemption is from regulations regarding maximum driving and on-duty time. It includes all of 49 CFR Part 395, the part of the regulations captioned “Hours of Service.” Such an exemption squares with the “regarding maximum driving and on-duty time” language of the legislation. Since Part 395 contains the actual HOS requirement and also contains the logbook requirement, an exemption from Part 395 means an exemption from both the HOS and logbook requirements.

The logbook requirement in Part 395 is there as a method of keeping track of HOS. As a logical matter, then, if utilities are now exempt from the HOS requirement, there is no need to keep track of something that no longer applies.

FMCSA must now change its regulations to reflect clearly the change that Congress has legislated. Most states must also change their regulations because most state regulations now have an HOS provision that applies to utilities, and the new legislation says that states also must exempt utilities from HOS regulations.

What should a utility contractor do? Most utilities will wait until federal and state regulators promulgate regulations before acting as if the regulators’ ideas of the exemption square with industry’s understanding of the exemption. Many states adopt federal regulations “by reference,” meaning that as soon as the federal regulations are published, state law is changed. Other states have other methods of adopting federal requirements. Talk with representatives of your utility(ies).

There are options for regulatory relief available to our non-line clearance members as well.

The short haul provision

With FMCSA’s so-called “short haul provision”, drivers of property-carrying CMVs which do not require a Commercial Driver’s License for operation, who operate within a 150 air-miles of their normal work reporting location:

- May drive a maximum of 11 hours after coming on duty following 10 or more consecutive hours off duty.
- Are not required to keep records-of-duty status (RODS).
- May not drive after the 14th hour after coming on duty 5 days a week or after the 16th hour after coming on duty 2 days a week.
The employer must maintain and retain accurate time records for a period of six months showing the time the duty period began, ended, and total hours on duty each day in place of RODS.

Drivers who use the short-haul provision are not eligible to use the 100 air-mile provision or the 16-hour exception.

The 100 air-mile provision

The 100 air-mile radius driver is exempt from keeping RODS if:

- He operates within a 100 air-mile radius of the normal work reporting location;
- He returns to the work reporting location and is released from work within 12 consecutive hours;
- He has at least 10 consecutive hours off duty separating each 12 hours on duty;

- He does not exceed 11 hours maximum driving time following 10 consecutive hours off duty.

For six months, the employer has to maintain and retain accurate time records showing:

- The time the driver reports for duty each day;
- The total number of hours the driver is on duty each day;
- The time the driver is released from duty each day; and
- The total time for the preceding seven days for drivers used for the first time or intermittently.

The 16 hour exception

The driver is exempt from the new HOS requirements if:

- He returns to his normal work reporting location and the employer releases him from duty at that location for the previous five days the driver has worked;
- He returns to the normal work reporting location and the employer releases the driver from duty within 16 hours after coming on duty following 10 consecutive hours off duty; and
- He has not taken this exemption within the previous six consecutive days, except when he has begun a new seven- or eight-consecutive day period with the beginning of any off-duty period of 34 or more consecutive hours.

TCIA will continue to keep you posted as additional information becomes available.

Peter Gerstenberger is senior advisor for safety, compliance & standards for the Tree Care Industry Association.

The Tree Care Industry Association will continue to keep you posted as additional information becomes available.

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January 26, 2006
Northeastern PA Turf Conference and Trade Show
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January 29-31, 2006
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February 12-16, 2006
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February 20-23, 2006
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Contact: Jeff Heintz, (701) 222-6561; jheintz@state.nd.us

February 21-26, 2006
2006 ASCA Consulting Academy, Atlanta, GA
Contact: Angela Corio, ASCA (301) 947-0483

February 28-March 2, 2006
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Many municipalities are struggling financially. With budget shortfalls and increasing costs, it is becoming more difficult for cities and towns to deliver necessary services. Trees are often on the losing side when poor economic circumstances reduce municipal budgets, because tree planting and maintenance are not considered as important as other municipal services.

Unfortunately, many municipalities allocate neither the funding nor the time to take care of their trees properly, and at the same time society is becoming more litigious. How many ads does one see for lawyers asking if you have had an accident? Such considerations should prompt municipalities toward greater efficiency in community tree management; if for no other reason than to protect the municipality from litigation. A municipality needs to exert a reasonable amount of effort toward caring for and inspecting their trees.

The question is, can a windshield survey be used reliably to assess trees compared to a traditional walking inspection?

A windshield survey is a method of evaluating trees where an arborist is driven along a municipality’s roads to record certain tree characteristics. A windshield survey can save time over walking, and they are most efficient when the arborist is looking for one or two particular tree characteristics.

Windshield surveys have been and continue to be used in many cities and towns throughout the United States. Cincinnati’s Urban Forestry Department uses a windshield survey to inventory trees – recording the species, size, and condition. In New York City a windshield survey is used to inspect for Dutch elm disease in Central Park. Utility arborists use windshield surveys all the time to establish pruning cycles for their lines. With most communities, the main purpose of a windshield survey is to identify hazardous tree conditions and prioritize them based on probability of target impact. This article will concentrate on hazard tree identification.

Many sources recommend a systematic inspection of trees. In a residential setting, tree inspections can include checking on tree health, the structural condition of the tree or loose support cables. For a municipality, golf course or park, a systematic tree inspection’s main goal is to find tree hazards.

**Inspection cycle**

Within a year, a tree’s structural and physiological condition can change dramatically; weather, humans, insects and diseases can be major factors that cause changes. Annual inspection of high use areas, such as heavily traveled roads or high use public parks, should help keep an arborist aware of changing situations. The results of an annual inspection can help an arborist plan and schedule upcoming maintenance. An annual inspection can also document that there is a systematic and standardized inspection protocol for assessing the community’s trees. The standardized protocol for hazard assessment is necessary because a number of lawsuits have demonstrated that municipalities, parks and commercial arborists are directly responsible for the upkeep and the inspection of the trees that they are responsible for.

How frequently to inspect trees depends on their location in reference to a potential target. Trees on a heavily used street or park should be inspected annually and after major weather disturbances. As an example, a children’s playground should be inspected frequently, but a wild-land hiking trail may never be checked. Most communities could break their systematic inspection process into three categories – Red, Orange and Green:

- **Red**: high priority – major roads, playgrounds, schoolyards and front yards
- **Orange**: medium use areas – side roads, seldom used park areas
- **Green**: low priority areas – rural roads, rural hiking trails
Survey issues

A municipality’s options for inspecting the trees for hazardous conditions are:

▶ Do nothing
▶ Conduct a thorough walking inspection
▶ Conduct a windshield survey
▶ Use a combination of techniques

Given the climate of litigation in the United States, recent court rulings and to enhance public safety, it would be unwise not to inspect the trees – although many communities and parks choose this option. Conducting a thorough up-close inspection of the entire community is not always feasible due to financial constraints. For instance, contractors in New England charge approximately $5 per tree to inspect for hazards. In addition, many municipalities lack the skilled labor needed to undertake a thorough inspection in-house.

Risk trees present potential hazards to public rights of way.
Conducting a systematic windshield survey of areas presents another option for the municipality to save time and money, while identifying problems.

The main problem with choosing this option is that until recently no one has examined the method’s reliability at identifying roadside hazardous tree conditions. Many professionals in the tree care industry have questioned the validity of this hazard tree inspection method. The U.S. Park Service Hazard Tree Guidelines (No. NPS-77, 1991) notes that, “...the obvious limitations of the effectiveness of this method may not allow it to be very persuasive in a court of law, and only a thorough documentation of findings will lend any credence to this method.”

Many urban foresters and arborists feel that in certain situations a windshield survey will not work effectively. For instance, it may not work well in congested urban areas where the arborist’s visibility may be poor or where the surrounding traffic conditions are difficult, causing some hazardous conditions to be missed. Other professionals feel that in any type of roadside situation this method is unacceptable for a thorough hazard tree survey. This is due to the inability to effectively examine the tree from every angle and the inability to get close to the tree. Jill Pokorny of the USDA Forest Service (Urban Tree Risk Management, 2003) writes that, “Subtle defects such as narrow cracks or girdling roots, even if they occur on the side facing the road, may go undetected simply because they cannot be readily seen from the road.”

All this may be true, but even if you conduct a walking inventory in most cases you will not be doing an excavating root collar inspection or inspecting the top of the tree with a climber or aerial lift. All types of surveys and inspections can miss hidden problems.

The question is, can a windshield survey be used to identify problems? The answer is yes, with reservations. The windshield survey can be used effectively depending on the roadside situation.

A municipality can have several types of roads or streets within their boundaries. One can expect to find developed roads, with town trees growing in front of homes or businesses with lawns. Trees are also often found in utility planting strips between the road and sidewalk, or in planting pits in a sidewalk. On undeveloped roads, there is no sidewalk or maintained lawn area and a woodland setting or an old stonewall may be what delineates the setback distance. A road may also have no town trees present, or the trees might not be worth surveying due to their small size. Such areas include new developments and older neighborhoods where the only trees were set back on private property. These roads can often be evaluated using the municipality’s aerial photographs or by doing a quick pre-survey of the streets.

The following conditions can assist in determining when it is appropriate to use a windshield survey to identify hazard trees. Studies have shown that windshield surveys have worked well in low traffic areas. In high traffic areas, concerns about the traffic can cause some disruptions of the survey. In high traffic areas, walking or using other means, like a bicycle, to move from tree to tree would be advisable. Another consideration is the degree of maintenance the trees receive in that municipality and the trees’ average condition. Towns or parks that have many trees in poor shape and with many hazardous conditions will dramatically slow down the survey. If the trees are not well maintained, a thorough inventory may be the best choice. If the trees are reasonably maintained, the windshield survey could be used to locate the quickly developing hazardous conditions such as hanging branches, recent storm damage, or for an annual update of street side conditions.

Windshield survey protocol

Prior to commencing the windshield survey, the following protocols need to be decided and established.

What is the major objective of this windshield survey? This will determine when the survey should take place. When the major objective is the identification of hazardous conditions, it should be conducted after leaf drop. A tree health survey would in most cases be conducted during the middle of the summer.

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to drive the inspector during the windshield survey. These vehicles offer a higher vantage point, giving good visibility to the tree inspector.

The person who conducts the tree survey should be a certified arborist or licensed arborist, depending on the state. Prior to surveying, the inspecting arborist needs to have received training in locating and identifying tree defects. It is very important that the baseline for the tree conditions be established prior to starting the survey. If more than one inspector is to be used, then all must receive the same training and report the same data.

Aside from a clean driver’s license, the driver does not need any special qualifications, although familiarity with town roads is very helpful.

Survey recommendations

A personal digital assistant (PDA) or laptop computer should be used to record all of the survey data. The system chosen should have the ability to synchronize with the office desktop computer for quick data importation. A PDA or laptop also has the ability to store lists. This saves time by allowing the surveyor to pick a particular item from a list, instead of repeatedly typing each item.

The following data should be collected for each hazard tree:

- Tree genus and species
- Location
- Target
- Tree defects or work required

For each tree containing a hazardous condition, a 12-point hazard rating system should be used. This is the most effective way to prioritize the work schedule.

A recommended hazard rating system was developed by Jill Pokomy of the USDA Forest Service and is available on the Web at: www.na.fs.fed.us/spfo/pubs/utf/utrmm/index.htm

The hazard rating is determined by four variables, and range from 12 (severe hazard) to three (very small hazard). Thresholds for the variables used to determine hazard ratings need to be established. The variables are: probability of target impact; size of the defective part; and probability of failure. The fourth variable is based on the collective experience of the tree inspector in assessing tree risk and observing tree failures in their region.

The scores for each variable are recorded and totaled for each tree, mitigation of
the hazard trees in that jurisdiction would start with the trees that have the highest number, in most cases there will be some trees rated 12, which are the first to be addressed.

If there are trees on both sides of the road, the inspector in some cases will have to be driven up and down the road in order to view both sides of the road.

One final logistical concern is the relative use of roadways during different days and times. For example, streets on which schools are located cannot be inventoried at certain times because there is risk of traffic accidents.

Discussion & conclusions

Windshield surveys have their place, especially in municipal, utility and park like settings. When a windshield survey is used to identify tree hazards, the more severe the problem, the more the chance of finding it by using a windshield survey. This result lends a degree of confidence in using windshield surveys to identify hazard trees. Considering that in many situations a community can only afford to remedy the most severe hazards, the windshield survey could be an effective method for assessing community trees for hazard.

Studies have shown that hazardous conditions can be discovered using a windshield survey in a community. The main factors in deciding when and where to use the windshield survey are time efficiency and cost. While no inventory will identify all hidden problems, the windshield survey will identify many problems that have the potential for causing property damage or personal injury.

Additional references

Publications


Useful Web Sites
USDA Forest Service
USDA Forest Service, Northeast Center for Urban & Community Forestry
www.umass.edu/urban
tree
USDA Forest Service, Urban Natural Resources Institute for the Northeast
www.unri.org

H.D.P. Ryan is professor of Arboriculture and Community Forestry, University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

C.J. Rooney is an arborist with Narragansett Electric Company in Providence, R.I. B.C.P. Kane is MAA Professor of Commercial Arboriculture at University of Massachusetts at Amherst. D.V. Bloniarz is an Urban Forester Research Scientist with USDA Forest Service in Amherst, Mass.
Can you finish this statement: “There are some things money can’t buy. For everything else there’s ______.” If you are like 100 million others, you have not only used this product for multiple purchases, but more than likely make monthly payments to this company.

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So powerful is differentiation, like Mastercard’s brand, that operating without a USP can essentially mean death to your business— or minimum wages for the owner for a lifetime.

You see, every tree contractor is always looking for the magic bullet that will enable them to convince customers they are worth an extra 5 percent in price, but few have anything really different. They are commodity peddlers of tree and plant healthcare services that use terms like “better quality, more professional, etc.” That would be like VISA competing against MasterCard by saying in ads that it has a prettier color of cards. Want proof that sameness is alive and well? Pick up the yellow pages and compare ads. See anything different? And if you do, can they really deliver? Do they have the proof to back it up? If it says same day service, what is their guarantee?

Highly profitable tree contractors have a true differentiation, one that sets them apart from their competitors. This is called a USP or Unique Selling Proposition. A USP is part of the placement component of the four “P”s in marketing strategy (product, price, placement, promotion). An effective USP is a benefit statement that appeals to the buying needs and desires of the target market you serve. It allows a firm to capture greater market share, build brand image, and most often secure a premium for its goods and services based on filling a need that your competitors overlook.

Designing and developing a USP for your company is not as hard as you might think but it will require you to do some research, writing and, most importantly, time before the final statement(s) can be achieved.

There are eight primary steps to developing an effective USP for your tree service company. They are as follows:

1. Identify your target segment, including the demographics of the buyers.

2. Document the obvious voids in the market that no firm is either filling or doing poorly. This is done through personal interviews, calls to the target market and focused probing questions.

3. List the products/services to meet this market that you offer or need to offer.

4. Develop benefit statements (USPs) that clearly communicate a difference of doing business with your firm and the products and services you provide.

5. Test your statements that you developed on your clients. Get feedback on whether on how much they value your benefit.

6. Create stories, case histories, etc. to back up your USP that you develop.
7. Use your USP on everything. Brand it!

8. Make it happen. Live up to what you claim to do and measure it constantly.

Don’t forget. Your different products and services will most likely have a different USP based on the target market. If you are fortunate, you can find one USP that fits all target groups and provides a competitive advantage for you.

Need some ideas. An electrical contractor recently adopted the USP of “wired right, on time” for their residential division. Research clearly showed that homeowners wanted them to show up on time and do it right. But they still want it cheap, right? Not at all. In fact, price was not nearly as important as correctness and timeliness. Wonder if he still prices himself per hour? Think again!

A plumbing and sewer cleaning service promises to “leave it cleaner than when they arrive.” Be honest. That’s important to their line of work. I mean who wants to walk in barefooted after they finish?

How about the hotel chain that keeps beating all the competition with one simple phrase that they back up. Guaranteed. Period. And I can personally tell you they will give a full refund if for any reason you are not satisfied.

A well crafted USP is powerful and yields big results. But I will let you in on a secret. Many business don’t really promote their differentiation. Why? FEAR. Fear of having to live up to the promise. But of course that’s why it is a non-negotiable.

When you are ready to experience some real difference in profits, take the plunge, the USP plunge that is. Develop a statement that truly sets you apart from the crowd and enables you to gain market share and new levels of growth and profit. Go ahead. “Be All That You Can Be.” “Just Do It.” Otherwise, you will be stuck with those “Everyday Low Prices.”

Jeff Stokes is president of Shawnee Mission Tree and Landscape, Inc., a regional tree and grounds maintenance service company serving both the residential and commercial market. Jeff is also author of several books and the NextLevel Contractor system which covers the 7 Non-negotiables of a Successful Contractor. He will making a presentation on this topic at TCI EXPO 2005 in Columbus, Ohio, in November.
The temperature was 97 degrees. The news was reporting that oil prices were climbing through $63 a barrel. It was late summer, but you had firewood on your mind? And with good reason – temperature and money.

By the time you read this, the temperatures again will be flirting with the freezing mark at night in some parts of the country. Boilers will be just starting to reawaken after a summer’s sleep, and the cost of fuel will be on everyone’s minds. As it turns out, that may be truer this year than any time in recent memory.

For consumers, the thought of firewood probably conjures up some Saturday Evening Post images of cut, split and delivered wood – a neat pile of crisply stacked cord wood. There may or may not be an image of a guy with a chain saw, or perhaps a modern woodsman with a splitter, or perhaps something even more modern – a full-time operator with a processor capable of ingesting large, tree-length logs into one end and spitting out custom cut pieces at the other.

It seems that it wasn’t so long ago that the firewood business was merely that extra income profit center or a part-time job for the off season and a great way to get rid of the stock you brought down all season long and had been piling up out back. Like the oil crisis of the 1970s, those images and those days are over. The worldwide energy crisis has created a whole new situation. A reference to a cord of firewood in St. Louis in the middle of this past summer at $318 had convinced us of that.

Whether you’re already into or just considering firewood as a part-time business, or if you are thinking of making it a new profit center or a more profitable one, there are some things you need to know.

Firewood has become a product. That means it’s not a commodity any more. It’s produced from a raw material, graded by type and quality, cut into pieces with specific purposes in mind and then marketed – just like product. Some of it comes packaged in shrink-wrap bundles with a brand name on them. Let’s put it another way – it’s not just a pile of firewood any more, and therein lies the opportunity for altogether new levels of profit.

Right now, there are three types of marketable firewood. (And we’re not talking species; it’s a matter of how the firewood is to be used.) The market itself defines these new firewood product lines loosely and structures them along their intended uses:

- Wood for heat.
- Wood for romance.
- Wood for hospitality (specialty woods for restaurants and hotels).

Wood for heat is the stuff that goes into outdoor wood boilers or furnaces, or in large commercial or industrial systems like one in use at Central Michigan University that takes in huge volumes of ground up waste wood (actually, it’s mulch at less than 5 inches in size) and conveys it via auger where it is burned for energy. (This is not pellet material, although there is a market for further processing to that point, as well.)

The second is what’s called “romance wood,” and it is the kind used for fires at home, or for ‘atmosphere’ fires, such as at campgrounds and in backyard fire pits. Some of this wood is the traditional fireplace or wood stove lengths, seasoned, cut, split and delivered (and if you can find an
old timer who remembers “the day,” stacked neatly as a cord). Precision-cut hardwood of three to four and a half inches is packaged in bundles, sometimes tied or plastic-wrapped and sold at home centers, convenience stores and roadside stands for far more than the proportional rate for the same wood sold as a full cord.

Finally, there’s a growing demand among restaurants like pizza and barbecue joints willing to pay a premium for specific species such as hickory, which they use for cooking food, adding a flavor and also, in a passive way, sending a scent throughout the restaurant.

From a business perspective, any time a commodity can be subcategorized like this, the opportunity presents itself for value-added marketing. As the subcategories can be further improved upon from the raw material, the price and profit goes up similarly. Take oil. It is harvested, if you will, and graded by quality. It is then processed into all sorts of products, from gasoline to jet fuel to plastics – even pharmaceuticals – and priced accordingly. Prices fluctuate according to demand and scarcity, driven largely by seasonal demand.

At the high-volume end of the scale are units like the Bandit Beast Recycler model 5680, grinding wood waste from logging operations and grinding it into ‘hog’ or toward fuel, then burning it off to make heat or electricity. Typically, these boilers take product under 5 inches - essentially, mulch.
Firewood has fewer value-added improvements, but the analogy still holds. We heard of one wood craftsman who refused to tromp through the woods or specialty wood outlets for his raw materials, which he uses for carvings and for furniture. Instead, he orders loads of firewood that are dumped at his workshop, and from them he culls specialty pieces and interesting-looking chunks. The rest he burns for heat. The lesson here is that the value of a product is all in how you think of the asset and how it can be used and therefore marketed.

Though firewood isn’t listed as an energy commodity (yet), you can get a feel for its value regionally, and thus you can begin to set a competitive price for your product. Check out www.firewoodcenter.com. There you’ll find all kinds of helpful information on the industry, beginning with how to start a firewood business (or grow one), right down to firewood prices by type and region. As a firewood vendor you are entitled to a free listing.

A sample of regional cord prices in early September on www.firewoodcenter.com:

- $116 Lansburg, MI
- $125 Gettysburg, PA
- $180 Tallahassee, FL
- $185 Boston, MA
- $225 Central, IL
- $240 Holden, MA
- $318 St. Louis, MO

**Equipment**

Another place to go is to the equipment manufacturers themselves, not only for help with the latest in hardware but also for the business end. In addition to its equipment, Timberwolf Manufacturing provides a host of business-friendly information, from user articles on its own equipment, of course, to a pair of articles that are essential reading: “How to Keep the Home Fires Burning,” and “Stack up the Profits.” The first is a Firewood 101 tutorial on getting started and where to source material. The second is a list of 11 tips on growing your firewood business.
In terms of machines, Timberwolf is known for its line of splitters (log, wood and firewood) as well as its TW-PRO line of processors (SL, CMX, MX and HD) that give an operator the ability to process firewood from the safety of an operator’s station at the rate of one-and-a-half to three cords per hour. Features include a patented Top Roll Clamping System to speed production and simplify processing, a hydraulic chain saw, interchangeable wedges, a selection of power cylinders, a live deck in various configurations that comes with a roller chain for long life and a grate to allow debris to fall away for a cleaner product.

At the very high-volume end of the scale are units like the Beast Recycler models from Bandit. But these units don’t produce firewood as we traditionally think of it.

Cory Gross, a sales rep for Bandit Industries notes that “All across the country, large operations are taking wood waste from logging operations and grinding it into what’s called ‘hog’ or boiler fuel, then burning it off to make heat or electricity. Central Michigan University has saved millions,” he says. Typically, these boilers take product under 5 inches. “It’s essentially the same thing as mulch,” Gross says. Bandit offers the Beast Recycler in four models: 2680, 3680, 4680 and 5680 – varying in capacity, horsepower and offering tow-behind or self-propelled models.

Rayco offers the LS2526 log splitter, a gas-powered, tow-behind log splitter for firewood. The unit splits two or four ways with a 25-ton split force, all from a 13 hp Honda which delivers 2500 psi of pressure, according to Rayco. One of the
big features for this device is the less than 10 seconds it takes to automatically cycle from start to split to start again. There is also a 600-pound log lift and a joystick-controlled, hydraulic-wedge lift that simplifies lowering and raising a four-way wedge, depending on the wood size.

Built-Rite Manufacturing Corporation in Ludlow, Vt., recently introduced a patent-pending Multi-Ring Bundle Wood Wedge. The company describes it as an efficient 16-way bundle wood wedge system, easily splitting hardwood up to 16-inches in diameter into 16 pieces no larger than 3 inches square. By changing the second ring on the unit, an operator can split logs into firewood (versus the bundle wood size) of four and a half inches.

The wedge is an option on the Built-Rite’s Models 50 and 86 SCP Processors and on the 24 HPWS Woodsplitter. The 24HPWS features a narrow profile, two part wedge to keep wood from flaring out sideways during processing and a six-second cycle time. Other processors include the 18SCP-HF, intended for start-up or part-time operations, the larger-framed 24SCP with 25-inch hydraulic chain saw, the 30 SCP with 31 hp Perkins diesel engine, 50SCP with a beefier four-cylinder Perkins, and their top-of-the-line Model 86SCP boasting an 86 hp Perkins and with a five-second cycle time and eight-way wedge for up to four cords per our.

Though in a normal year it may be late for jumping into the firewood business, high energy prices should push demand for firewood (and the price per cord) to near record heights this season. Now is also the time to start planning for next year. Though the immediate energy crisis may again ebb, as it did 30 years ago, it won’t likely stay away nearly as long this time. And depending on who you listen to, it could come back with a vengeance. Alternatives and options are nice to have – for heat and for business.
PRODUCTION & PROFITABILITY
The SP4012 stump cutter really moves. A unique dual speed ground system allows the SP4012 to travel faster than any other stump cutter on the market today. The unit also boasts a 1-inch thick, 21-inch diameter cutting wheel, letting you grind faster and smoother than ever before. And heavy-duty construction, like flux core weldments, hardened bushings and tapered roller bearings, makes the SP4012 the most durable stump cutter available. With its wide range of features and dependable construction, the SP4012 is designed to maximize production and profits, while minimizing downtime.

OPERATOR ADVANTAGE
• Variable Swing Speed Control lets operators work at a comfortable pace.
• Hydraulic Steering minimizes operator fatigue.
• Precision Hydraulics provide optimum user control and operation.

OPTIONS
• Variety of gas and diesel engines to choose from
  > 27 HP Kohler Gas
  > 31 HP Briggs-Vanguard Gas
  > 28.7 HP Lombardini Diesel
• Wired or Wireless Remote
• Scrape Blade

Find out more about the SP4012, call JP Carlton today at 800-243-9335
or visit us on the Web at www.stumpcutters.com (some equipment shown is optional)
Please circle 13 on Reader-Service Card
Seeing Snow Removal as a Profit Center

By John Allin

About half of tree care company owners think of snow removal as a profit center and the rest do not. Owners in areas of regular, heavy snowfall understand the possible profits in snow removal. But owners in fringe markets that receive six to 20 inches of snow in a season can also generate revenue.

When you run a business – whether it is a snowplow business, a landscape business or a tree care business – you need to be able to read a balance sheet and understand the implications on your business. You need to learn how to generate monthly or even weekly financials.

Many companies try to expense their 12 months of overhead into their eight or nine-month core pruning and removal business. Then during winter they count plowing as free money. That theory is wrong from an accounting standpoint. You need to take your overhead, spread it out over 12 months and find a way to generate revenue in the winter.

In my company we generate financials every single day in the winter. We know exactly how much money we have made by noon for the previous night's snow-plowing across the country.

Pricing the work

In the snow business (or in the tree care business) you need to know how you are pricing your services and whether you are making any money at it. There are several different ways to price snow services.

Per Push – every time you go out to visit the site you charge the customer. Areas that get a lot of snow will benefit from charging Per Push.

Per Event – charges one amount depending on how many inches fall. Depending on the size of the job, it might be $100 for 1 to 3 inches, $200 for 4 to 6 inches and $300 for 6 to 9 inches.

Per Hour, Per Piece of Equipment – charges for each piece of equipment until the job is done. Some people think this is an easier way to manage costs. I believe this is the least efficient and least profitable way to price things.

Seasonal Pricing – is a set fee for the year, whether it snows three times or 30. To price this accurately, you need to figure annual averages and how often snow falls at night. If it snows at night and your crews plow at night, most customers these days demand another trip to clear things during the day. Retail areas especially want things clean during the day. In some parts of the country if a customer slips and falls at a mall or plaza, he will get up. In New Jersey, Maryland or Connecticut, he gets a lawyer.

Non-refundable Retainers – are a great strategy in markets where they don’t get a lot of snow. Price a job (for example: residential $25, commercial $150) and tell them that you need two plowings paid for up front, non-refundable, even if it doesn’t snow. They might hang up, but if they agree you know that site will be very profitable, plus you get your money up front. Then you can start dropping off some of those non-profitable, $15 driveway accounts.

Why should you shoulder all the risk of snow-free winters? You have trucks that you have to start up every week to get the oil through the engine. You have trucks that you have to drive around to avoid dry-rot in the tires. You have a mechanic that you need to keep on staff. You have rent and utility bills that need to be paid. The customer should pay to have you waiting and available to take care of them as soon as it snows.

Selling the work

I have a sales philosophy that seems to work for us. I believe that there are only two reasons not to get the sale.

1. We cannot do what the customer wants.
2. We got outsold. If you got outsold then the other company had a better salesperson.

If you quote a job at $100 and the customer wants it done for $50, of course you can’t do what the customer wants. Ascertain the customer’s budget. In the snowplowing business they all have it in their minds.

When customers call I ask why and what they are paying now. If the answer is they need to get three bids I think “cheap.” The word bid is customer speak for cheap. I don’t bid anything. I will quote work but I won’t bid on anything. I tell callers that I have a reputation in town for being the best and the most expensive. If they are just looking for the cheapest price then I can’t help them. If they are happy with their current contractor but are still looking for a lower price, I tell them to call me when they aren’t happy with the level of service they receive.

The margins for successful snow plowing operations around the country are in the 65 percent gross margin range. De-icing can be incredibly profitable, too, generally in the 75 percent range. If you are not getting that then you should strive to get there.

The problem in our business is that too many guys will do the job for too little money. I once had someone call in the middle of a snowstorm about four weeks into our season. He told me that he had six gas stations and his snowplow guy wasn’t showing up. I asked him what he was paying and he told me $25 per push. I laughed and told him I knew why he wasn’t being taken care of. I told him I could do the job for $65 per push. He thought that was a lot of money, but I told him I could have all of his stations plowed within the hour because I had 240 guys plowing snow for me. He would be paying $65 for a job well done.

The type of customer has a big influence on how much money you can make. I prefer customers who pay their bills. I can find...
a lot of people who don’t want to pay their bills as I am sure you could, too. We gravitate toward retail sites because they have a high service level expectation. The customer who only wants you to show up if there is more than 4 inches of snow — and still wants you to cover the liability — is not a good customer. Retail is generally a high service level expectation because they want customers to be able to get into the store to spend money. They want you there again and again and again. Industrial sites generally don’t generate the same kind of revenue.

We also look for parking lots that don’t have a lot of wake up calls in them. (A wake up call is an uneven manhole cover or some other obstruction.) We don’t want manhole covers that stick up or imperfections in the parking lot. We don’t really want to do gravel parking lots and we don’t like parking decks, either. Parking decks have expansion joints in them, and some have coated decks you can peel right up with a steel cutting edge.

Doing the work

We use a lot of sub-contractors. There are plenty of people out there who want to plow snow but they have no business sense (or they have no business talking to customers). I have some guys working for me who look as if they may have taken a bath six months ago, but they are excellent plow operators and can make a lot of money for us. These guys have trucks that look fine at night. Subs who like to plow snow are foaming at the mouth waiting for a storm. Also, a sub-contractor wants to work and generate revenue. If a sub breaks down, he will do everything in his power to get repaired or limp through the rest of the storm. In markets like Maryland, where it snows maybe four or five times a year, these guys don’t want to miss a single snowfall because they miss a good portion of their winter revenue. If they break something they will go to great lengths to get back up and running.

Whose contract?

Should you use your contracts or customer-generated contracts? A customer-written contract protects the customer, just as our contracts are written by our lawyer who is being paid to protect us.

Everything is a negotiation. When a customer sends us a contract we read it and we strike out anything we don’t like. The first thing we strike out is a requirement to bond a job. We will not bond a snowplowing job.

We do several malls for one of the largest property management companies in the United States. They sent us a contract that had indemnification language two pages long. We got it down to one paragraph by negotiating back and forth. Don’t
Seminars begin the day before the trade show on Tuesday, Nov. 8 through Friday, Nov. 11 at the Greater Columbus Convention Center in Columbus, Ohio.

“The best way to have a good idea is to have a lot of ideas.”
– Linus Pauling, Two time Nobel Prize winner

Trees may grow seasonally, but tree care companies and their employees’ careers should grow year-round. The intensive, professional and business growth seminars and panel discussions at TCI EXPO can help. They’re designed for real-world arborists and tree care service company owners and managers.

View the TCI EXPO seminar program at www.tcia.org or call (800) 733-2622 to request a TCI EXPO program brochure.
be afraid to change a contract. If you get a contract from a customer it is not cast in stone and they will negotiate. Contracts are negotiable and customers know it.

We should assume responsibility for things we foul up. You cannot put in your contract that you don’t take responsibility for anything that might happen. We do say that plowing or de-icing a parking lot will not reduce it to bare pavement. We don’t accept responsibility for acts of God, but if we are supposed to plow the lot at 2 inches and the mall is ready to open with 6 inches of snow in the lot, we are at fault. We have to do the job that we say we are going to do.

Our contracts specifically state that we are not responsible for asphalt. The very nature of running a steel blade over a soft asphalt surface is such that some damage will occur. If there is an imperfection in the blacktop where a crack has risen up, it will peel up when hit with a blade at 25 miles per hour. We also film every site before the snow season so we know that a problem existed before snow fell and our plows arrived.

A landscape contractor in Cincinnati I know generates revenue all winter long by charging his customers for one plowing a month, every month for five months, whether it snows or not. Why can he do that? Because he thinks he can. If you think you can or you think you can’t, you’re right. This contractor in Cincinnati thinks he can and he does. Keep that in the back of your mind in anything you do throughout life and in the snow and tree care industry.

John Allin, senior vice president of Symbiot Business Group, is one of the foremost consultants in the country on snow and ice. His book, "Managing Snow and Ice," is considered the Bible for snow contractors wishing to grow their business. This article was taken from a presentation he made at TCI EXPO 2004 in Detroit.

Managing Snow and Ice
(book and CD ROM)
By John A. Allin

From this successful snow removal contractor comes a new, comprehensive guide to the business of snow and ice removal. From pricing to plowing, you'll learn every aspect of owning a snow and ice removal company. Boost productivity and profitability. Companion CD-ROM contains more than 25 forms and documents.

Price: $49.95 (TCIA member price: $45.95)
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• Business Distinction with TCIA Accreditation
• Brand Name Supplier Discounts
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• More To Come in 2005...

Over 60 years of tree care business and safety education is only a phone call away! Throughout the evolution of TCIA (formerly known as National Arborist Association), we have compiled a vast number of Business Management and Safety resources to help your company grow and keep your employees safe.

For a limited time only, Tree Care companies who have never been a member of TCIA are eligible for a $100 discount. Your TCI Magazine subscription is not an indication of TCIA membership. In fact, you might be missing out on all the other great benefits that TCIA has to offer.

For a $250 investment, your company will receive a comprehensive package of business management and safety resources (valued at over $360). Your colleagues have been part of TCIA’s past – now is the time to become part of TCIA’s future.

To learn more, call TCIA today at 1-800-733-2622 or visit www.tcia.org.
**Integrated Pest Management (IPM)** is defined as a strategy that avoids or prevents pest damage with minimum adverse impact on human health, the environment, and non-target organisms. Implementing IPM in the landscape successfully requires a broad knowledge of plant and pest biology and the various tactics that can be used to control them. There are few cookbook approaches to control the myriad pests in complex horticulture plantings; therefore, the more experience and knowledge possessed by the IPM practitioner, the closer the strategies employed meet the definition of IPM. Other names for IPM are Plant Health Management and Whole Plant Care, which, when examined carefully, are very similar in concept and practice.

Most pest control professionals who have certifications or college degrees have studied a particular discipline such as entomology (the study of insects), plant pathology (the study of diseases), ornamental horticulture, etc. There are a limited number of programs offering IPM degrees in the ornamental horticulture field, and the reality is most professionals have learned about IPM through experience, meetings, workshops, short courses, and books on the subject. That coupled with an increased demand by urban residents for least toxic pest control has resulted in a shortage of highly skilled practitioners of IPM in ornamental horticulture.

IPM is like preventative medicine. People usually go to the doctor after symptoms have become serious, and homeowners call arborists or pest control professionals when trees are in advanced stages of decline. However, it is more common in horticulture to be called after the plant has been dead for some time. By then, the only organisms on the tree are decay organisms such as saprophytes, or evidence left from insects attracted to stressed trees that were already dying. Thus, determining what caused the tree to decline and eventually die is often difficult and requires a great deal of detective work.

An example I often use is the sudden death of pine trees that occurs after the first heat wave. Very few pests actually have the ability to kill a healthy tree. Most insects, diseases, vertebrates, spider mites, nematodes, abiotic factors, etc., cause abnormalities of growth or produce nuisance byproducts such as honeydew. When trees die it is usually from a combination of factors. Some of the most important prime stressors in the landscape are abiotic, such as over or under watering of plant material. Overwatering can encourage root rot pathogens such as *Phytophthora* spp. and underwatering stresses a plant, which will attract pests such as bark beetles that can sense overheated trees that can’t cool themselves through transpiration.

Transpiration can cool a plant by 20 to 30 degrees Fahrenheit on a hot dry day. Thus, a tree that has a compromised root system from over or under watering or soil compression from will not be able to meet the demand to transport water to its leaves when hot weather suddenly demands it.

The tree is then attacked by bark beetles that can detect the chemicals and heat radiating from the stressed tree. The combination of factors, not the pests alone, results in death. Trees will exhibit sudden death symptoms of twigs or branches when organisms that injure or plug phloem or xylem tissue have caused enough damage to impede the uptake of water demanded by the first onset of hot weather after cool or moderate weather. This often seems sudden to homeowners because the symptoms aren’t expressed until there is a rapid change in weather. Spraying pesticides on the tree may protect it from attack by the easily seen bark beetles for a short period, but spraying is costly. And if the underlying stressor is not corrected, the tree will...
eventually succumb to the next organism
that attacks it.

The components of an IPM program:

- Pest Identification
- Monitoring
- Prevention
- Injury Levels and Action Thresholds
- Pest Control Tactics

Prevention and monitoring – key components of an IPM program – are difficult to implement when an arborist is called in after a tree is in an advanced stage of decline. IPM requires constant monitoring and involvement in plant selection, planting, and care. Once an arborist or pest control professional is consulted, it behooves the owner of the trees to hire them to implement an IPM program. Reality is they will probably not want to spend the money on such a service, unless they can be educated and convinced to do so by the arborist or pest control professional.

One of my research projects is evaluating residential maintenance practices and expertise in the Orange County area of Southern California. Our initial surveys and focus group meetings indicate a lack of professional training and expertise in the maintenance gardener population working in residential landscape maintenance. Coupled with homeowners’ lack of horticulture knowledge and willingness to pay for it, we have a dismal situation resulting in landscapes and trees that are being subjected to plant damaging practices. I have, therefore, added Homo sapiens to the list of major pests causing growth abnormalities or death of landscape plants and trees.

Diagnosing plant disorders is often difficult and time consuming, as it requires a detailed history of the plant, soil type, watering practices, pesticide application history, etc. I use a sample information form to gather as much information as possible needed to properly diagnose a problem. Difficult-to-diagnose problems often require a field visit and require the diagnostician to have tools such as a magnifying lens, hand trowel, shovel, soil probe, knife, binoculars, and plenty of vials and plastic bags to collect samples.

Unfortunately, it takes a great deal of training to be able to identify a pest to genus and species. With the increase in international travel and trade, major ports of entry such as Southern California are experiencing an epidemic of exotic and invasive species. Thus, a person who is not trained in entomology or plant pathology may not be familiar with all of the pests found in the landscape. It has therefore become even more important to send unusual or extremely damaging pests to trained scientists at regulatory or university labs for identification to determine the proper treatment or regulatory action.

Monitoring is one of the components of IPM that requires proper identification of the pest to be most effective. Once the pest is identified, the IPM practitioner will be able to use the biology of the pest to determine the type of monitoring tools available, time of year to monitor, and strategies to control it. In agricultural systems where IPM is aimed at maximizing yield in addition to the other goals stated in its definition, it is economically important to intensely monitor the crop to make timely decisions based on economic thresholds that weigh the cost of the treatment versus the potential loss of harvestable crop. The urban forest on the other hand uses thresholds based on aesthetics, reaction to a nuisance, or hazard to buildings or people.

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**UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION**

**SAMPLE INFORMATION (2-95)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Address:</td>
<td>City:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day Phone:</td>
<td>Landscape:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production: Horticulture</td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample type and variety:</td>
<td>Turfgrass:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shrub:</td>
<td>Crop:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Describe problem and part of plant affected:

(Use back of form if more space needed)

Could the problem have been caused by an animal? (Look for obvious feeding damage, scats, tracks, sightings).

Yes | No

When did the problem start?

| Soil: | Drainage: | Irrigation: |
| Sandy | Medium (loam) | Heavy (clay, adobe, etc.) |
| Ph (acid, neutral or alkaline) | Ec (electro conductivity) |
| Irrigation application rate in inches per hour |
| Forrow: | Basin | Flood |
| Other (Specify) |
| Spinkler on hose: | Drip |

How frequently does the irrigation occur and for how long?

When are plants irrigated? Morning | Daytime | Evening

How is irrigation amount, frequency determined?

CIMIS Tensionometer | Irrigation Timer | Feel Method | Wild Guess

Pesticides: If treated with a pesticide, please list name, formulation and when used:

Type: Insecticide | Fungicide | Herbicide | Plant Growth Regulator |
| Formulation: Emulsifiable concentrate | Wettable powder | Dispersable granule |
| Granule | Dust | Ready to use spray | Aerosol | Other |
| Weather at time of application: Temp | Humidity | Wind Speed | Sunny | Cloudy |
| Type of application equipment used and rate of pesticide: |
| Fertilizers, micronutrients and soil amendments used: |
| Type and formulation | How Much | When and How Applied |

Cultural, Physical or Mechanical Practices (such as aeration, mulching, pruning, etc)

This sample information form can be used to gather as much information as possible needed to properly diagnose a problem.
Monitoring is a preventative, time-intensive activity that many homeowners are not willing to pay for. However, many pests are an annual problem and occur on the same host seasonally when the environmental conditions are correct. Thus, good record keeping and monitoring enable the IPM practitioner to use the least toxic strategies early in the pest’s development – before it can develop huge populations and cause any significant damage or reach a reaction threshold.

IPM pest control tactics:

- Cultural
- Mechanical
- Physical
- Biological
- Chemical

Cultural practices include proper landscape design, soil preparation, pruning, irrigation, and fertilization. Mechanical tactics or tactics include the use of barriers, machinery, pruning of infested material, and mulching. Physical tactics include practices such as pruning to open the canopy, protection from the sun, and proper drainage. Insects and pathogens are attracted to – or better able to attack – stressed trees. Basically, most trees in the urban forest are stressed. New homes and developments are characterized by smaller lot sizes, and highly compacted subsoil. Many trees in the urban forest are unhealthy because they are growing in narrow parkways or small planting holes surrounded by asphalt and cement, in planting holes just large enough for their original root balls. Trees are often planted in the center of grass lawns that are given frequent shallow irrigations that do not provide water to the deeper tree roots, thus forcing tree roots to grow near the surface where they are more susceptible to weather and mechanical damage from lawn mowers.

Chemical tactics are a popular practice because results are often almost instantaneous and inexpensive relative to the more expensive labor-intensive tactics. Homeowners like to see dead organisms and pest control companies get paid when customers see results. However, past use of persistent and toxic broad-spectrum pesticides created a public fear of their effects and a demand for least toxic methods of pest control.

Common reasons pesticides may fail to
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control pests are:

- use of the wrong pesticide due to improper identification of the pest
- spraying a resistant stage of the pest
- not following label instructions.

Pesticide dosages are determined through time-consuming and rigorous research trials. Contrary to popular thought, too much pesticide can be repellent to insects and also accelerates the development of resistance to the pesticide by pest organisms. Many pesticides require the addition of a surfactant to provide better coverage on waxy leaf surfaces or the use of slightly acidic water, rather than alkaline water. Most recently, biorational pesticides have been developed that are short-lived, narrow-range toxins derived from plants, fungi, bacteria or viruses. It must also be recognized that if pests being sprayed are secondary, the causal organism or problem will continue to weaken the plant, and thus the treatment will be therapeutic and not curative. In extreme cases, where populations have been allowed to build up over time or a weakened tree needs to be protected from yet another attack, a pesticide treatment may be necessary to buy time for the cause of the problem to be determined.

Biological control (BC) is well suited for urban pest control and a bit more complicated to implement and evaluate. Biological control is defined as the action of parasites, predators, or pathogens in maintaining another organism’s population density at a lower average level than would occur in their absence. It may occur naturally in the field or result from manipulation or introduction of biological control agents (natural enemies) by people. Because BC agents are parasites and predators they allow the pest population to build up before really taking effect. They are also more sensitive to unusual weather and many of the synthetic pesticides used for pest control. Many people think of the annual release of green lacewings and ladybird beetles when you mention BC. However, in Southern California, BC agents are often non-native species that have adapted to the local environment and do not need to be reintroduced once established. They have been brought into this area by scientists to control exotic species that have entered the state without their natural enemies and therefore have been free to create havoc on the hosts they feed on. Unlike exotic pests that attack agricultural crops and are placed under immediate quarantine and eradicated by regulatory agencies, exotic pests that enter urban areas and attack ornamental plantings are often detected after they have established over a wide area and are difficult to eradicate due to the cost and public sensitivity to a widespread pesticide campaign in a densely populated urban area. Fortunately, university scientists have been very successful at traveling to the country of origin and bringing back BC agents that have controlled the exotic pest populations without having any adverse impact on natural species.

Knowing how to evaluate the status of BC in the landscape is extremely important. Often it is as simple as monitoring for the BC agent, or knowing how to recognize their presence, such as round exit holes where the parasitoid has emerged from the parasitized insect. Spraying with many of the organophosphates, carbamates, and pyrethroids can be extremely disruptive to more pesticide sensitive BC agents and result in explosive pest population growth. Judicious use of pesticides in time and space can minimize the impact on BC agents and be more effective against the susceptible life stage of the pest. Parasites, parasitoids, and predators need trees and flowers that produce pollen and nectar as food sources. It was thought for many years that systemic insecticides were safe to BC agents, however, recent research by Dr. Tim Paine at the University of California, Riverside, has demonstrated that systemics, such as imidacloprid, can be present at sublethal doses in the nectar. While this is not enough to kill the BC agents, it can result in dramatically reduced egg laying. Widespread, indiscriminate use of pesticides toxic to BC agents over a large regional area can have substantial impacts on BC.

A recent study by Dr. Cheryl Wilen with the UC IPM Program in Southern California, found that a majority of pesticides used by homeowners were for ant control. While most homeowners control ants to keep them out of their homes, it is also an important IPM strategy to control ants in the landscape because of their symbiotic relationship with honeydew producing insects such as whiteflies, scales, mealybugs, and aphids. In exchange
Research shows that Cambistat gently slows the growth of trees, allowing the tree to redirect energy from canopy growth to defense chemicals, fibrous root production, and other uses. The resulting benefit of the reallocation of energy makes your tree healthier and more durable.
for the honeydew, ants will protect these sucking insects from predators and parasites, and in some cases distribute the sucking insects throughout the plant.

**Exotic pests**

Increased international travel and trade passing through southern California ports and a population of over 16.5 million residents from every corner of the world have been major factors in the increased introduction of exotic invertebrates into California. Between 1955 and 2000, 297 new exotic invertebrates have been introduced into California or an average of 6.6 species per year. Most of these have been from the order Homoptera hitchhiking on plant material. Once exotic species enter California they have a good chance of surviving because of the variety of climates and density and diversity of plants grown in urban and agricultural areas. Thus, urban areas with their mild climate and extensive native and exotic plantings can serve as an "urban incubator" for exotic pests. Once established in urban areas they can infest production nurseries that ship throughout California and the United States.

Reporting any strange or especially damaging pests to regulatory agencies is an essential part of efforts to keep exotic pests from entering the country and establishing a foothold. The Web has become an important source of information on IPM and exotic pests. In California useful Web sites are: http://anrcatalog.ucdavis.edu and www.ipm.ucdavis.edu. Regulatory information can be found at: http://aphis.usda.gov/ppq/manuals/online_manuals.html and www.cdfa.ca.gov/index.htm.

**In summary:**

- Most pests such as insects, diseases, vertebrates, spider mites, nematodes, mollusks, abiotic factors, etc., cause abnormalities of growth or produce nuisance byproducts such as honeydew. When trees die it is usually from a combination of factors.
- Most urban forest “action thresholds” should be renamed “nuisance or hazard thresholds.”
- Most of our nuisance pests are cyclical and many of them are introduced exotic species under good biological control.
- Urban forests are not natural, therefore, many of the trees in them are stressed. Stressed trees attract pests and are more susceptible.
- To successfully implement IPM in the landscape requires a broad knowledge of plant and pest biology and the various tactics that can be used to control them.
- Increasing exotic pest introductions are one of the greatest threats to our urban forests and agricultural system.

John Kabashima, Ph.D., has been an environmental horticulture advisor for the University of California Cooperative Extension, Orange County, since 1987 and the county director since 2004.
New Guide for Rope Inspection Criteria

The Cordage Institute is an international, not-for-profit association of manufacturers, producers and resellers of cordage, rope and twine. The guideline contains 60-plus pages of detailed information, including information for rope logs and record-keeping, and details on inspection and evaluation procedures. There are assessment tables that describe damage conditions and indicate action to be taken. It is a tool for enhancing rope durability and improving the safe use of rope by identifying when a rope needs to be replaced.

“Careful and frequent inspection of fiber rope, using procedures contained in this document, reflects prudent safety management required to protect personnel and property,” the publication says in its statement of purpose. “This Guideline provides information and procedures to inspect ropes and to establish criteria for evaluation. This document provides inspectors with help to make reasonable decisions regarding retirement or continued use, including repairing or downgrading.”

Here are a few excerpts:

1.2 Basis for Inspection and Retirement

1.2.1 Fiber ropes are employed in a large variety of applications that differ greatly in the severity of use. In some applications, ropes can serve for many years. In more severe applications or under different conditions, the same rope may degrade rapidly. Also, ropes of different size, construction or material can show substantial differences in longevity in the same application. For each specific fiber rope application the user must establish a basis for retirement that considers conditions of use, experience with the application and the degree of risk present.

1.2.2 An inspector should always act conservatively when evaluating a rope and making recommendations for further use. Residual strength in a used rope can only be estimated and destructive test methods are required to be definitive. The visual or tactile methods described herein can only provide an estimate of rope condition.

1.2.3 Ropes that have been properly selected and used may be kept in service with some wear if inspected and evaluated in accordance with these guidelines.

1.2.4 This document provides guidance for situations where extensive usage history, documentation, inspection facilities and testing laboratories are available. However, this is most frequently not the case. Less comprehensive inspections are very worthwhile and should be carried out.

5.3.3 Lay out the rope in a straight line, on a smooth surface, under hand tension. Attempt to apply enough tension to straighten the rope (in increments if space is limited). Small diameter ropes may be inspected by pulling segments hand over hand. For long lengths of larger ropes, it is best to utilize a mechanical advantage to apply light tension on the rope while it is being inspected.

5.3.4 If a rope is long, it may be marked and coded in evenly spaced intervals. For easier identification, mark each fifth and tenth length interval more strongly. If the rope is very dirty, intervals could be marked by using knotted twine pieces passed through the rope. Tape is also appropriate if wrapped completely around the rope.

5.3.5 Visually examine, stepwise, the entire rope length to detect damage and deterioration; include eye splices and/or end-to-end splices (long or short). Record all findings; identify end-to-end location of detectable damage areas.

5.3.6 Tighten the rope down its length as you would a plank or mast. Inspect for high or low strands and randomly uneven cross sections. Look for twist in braided and plaited ropes, and corkcrowning in stranded ropes.

5.3.7 For ropes small enough for a tactile inspection, feel for unevenness, rough spots and stiffness (lack of flexibility) sections.

5.3.8 Measure the rope circumference. Determine the circumference in a number of places, in particular in any damaged areas. This is most easily done with a thin whipping twine, thin metal or fabric tape measure or a pi-tape, wrapped around the rope with slight hand tension. Make note of nominal circumference, and any point on the rope where the circumference varies more than 10 percent from what is found on most of the rope. Ropes may decrease in circumference if well used and may be less than specified for new ropes.

5.3.9 Look for variations in the lay length (in a twisted rope) or pick length (in a braided or plaited rope). Apply a small tension to the rope and check this length at various locations along the rope. Note any appreciable deviations in lay or pick length. This length should not vary by more than plus or minus 5 percent over the rope length. On long specimens, the tension must be high enough to minimize the effects of friction with the ground.

5.3.10 Examine the rope for abrasion, cuts, broken yarns. Make a note of the type, location and level of damage such as, number of broken or noticeably damaged yarns, depth and length of abrasion or wear spots, frequency and spacing of damage, if damage is one strand or multiple strands. Estimate the loss of strength by comparing abraded or cut fibers as a percentage of the rope diameter or strand diameter. Lengthwise damage of several adjacent strands should be summed the same as if it were around the circumference.

5.3.11 Check any broken rope specimens in detail. A meaningful inspection must include both ends of a broken rope. Note location and nature of break. If possible, identify the conditions that caused the damage, such as rough hardware surfaces, points of contact, excessively sharp bends, or introduction of twist from winching practices.

5.3.12 Open the rope and examine the interior. Turn twisted rope slightly to open the interior for observation. Push on single braided or plaited ropes and/or use a fid to open the interior to view. On double braided ropes, push on the rope and use a fid to open a small hole to view the core. Be careful not to pull strands excessively. Look for broken filaments, fuzzy areas, kink bands.

5.3.13 Check braided ropes for hardness. Pushing on the rope should cause the braids to open. Braided ropes should be supple and bend easily. They should flatten slightly when compressed laterally.

5.3.14 Check Kernmantle, jacketed ropes or double braids for core breaks. This is manifested by sudden reduction in diameter and can be felt by running hands over the rope.

A PDF of the International Guideline CI 2001 can be downloaded at www.ropecord.com. The pocket guide price is $35 plus shipping. Discounts are available for bulk orders. Contact the Cordage Institute via fax: (610) 971-4859, or e-mail: info@ropecord.com, or visit www.ropecord.com.
Frankly it scares me. In working with literally hundreds of small to medium-sized business over the past decade I have been terrified at how few of them take their business planning seriously. Even more horrifying is that a fair number of them did not even have a business plan at all! Let me make this clear: sustained business success does not come from chance, fate or good luck. To run a successful and profitable company it is critical that you understand, implement and value the process of effective business planning.

But rather than just jump up and down on my soap box, let me try to lay out for you a reasoned and well thought out case for why you should invest your time and energy in creating and maintaining a solid business plan.

Following are my “Top 5 Reasons Why You Should Have a Business Plan.”

1. Planning sets direction

One of the top three reasons why companies fail and go bankrupt is the lack of a vivid and detailed vision for the future of the company. Because they are not clear on where they are going, how they will compete in the marketplace, what they truly want to accomplish – they lose their way, stumble and fall … and cannot get back up.

For the past several years I have been leading special one-day business strategy seminars for CEOs of companies from $2 million and $500 million. At the end of the day I always ask the assembled group, “What do you believe are the top three challenges facing your company?” With a total of more than 700 CEOs to date, the number one answer by a wide margin is, “I have not done a good enough job of setting a strong and clear direction for my people.” The answer to this dilemma: a detailed and specific business plan that is very well communicated throughout the entire organization.

2. A plan gives you focus

There are three key elements to creating excellence at any endeavor: Focus, Discipline and Action. You must be fanatically focused on the vivid and compelling direction of the firm. You must then have the discipline to follow that direction and not stray off course. And lastly, the amount of action you apply to your focused plan will directly determine the amount of success you will enjoy. A little bit of focus (no real plan), a little bit of discipline (you don’t really follow the plan), a little bit of action (you don’t give it 100 percent) – the outcome will be mediocrity. And once you start accepting mediocrity in your life, you become a magnet for mediocrity.

3. Planning establishes a common language

I mentioned above that the lack of a clear and vivid vision is one of the top three reasons that businesses go out of business; well the number one reason is lack of open, honest and robust communication. For me, perhaps the greatest value in a plan is that it gets everyone in the organization talking about the same things. The plan becomes a platform for discussion, a document to be debated, advocated and even attacked. It fosters passionate dialogue about where the company is going, how we will get there and if that is a realistic and attainable goal. The more people that are talking about what it will honestly take to make the company better – the better the company will become.

4. The plan helps establish how to allocate scarce resources

Every company, no matter the size, is in a constant battle of making decision about how to deploy limited resources. There is only a certain amount of time, money and people and to run a successful organization those critical elements have to be used in the most effective and efficient way possible. A plan then acts as a filter for setting priorities.

Every day business owners wrestle with incredibly difficult and often highly complex issues. What is most important thing for me to focus on right now? Where can we increase our competitive advantage, gain more market share, even enter a new market altogether? Do I buy new equipment, hire additional staff, invest in new facilities or possibly buy out a small competitor? These are tough questions and the very nature of a business plan is to help you in directing the allocation or resources with a higher degree of confidence and decreased levels of risk.

Come hear John Spence in a full-day workshop on Strategic Business Planning at TCI EXPO in Columbus, Ohio, this November! Visit www.tcia.org or call (603) 314-5380.
An important point. Just as critical as it is for a plan to help you focus on what you should be doing; perhaps even more valuable is that a good business plan will help you have the courage to decide on what you should NOT be doing! What projects and people should you move away from? What should you not be spending time or money on? What markets would not be right for you, even if it looks exciting and tantalizing? If you try to be all things to all people, you will become nothing to anyone. If you are always trying to keep all of your options open, you are also not fully pursuing the best options. One of the most essential skills of a successful business owner or manager is clearly determining what not to do, and your business plan is a valuable tool in making those key decisions.

5. It gets you working on your business

The vast majority of my clients are so busy putting out fires, handling customers, closing new deals – working IN their businesses – that they have no time at all to work ON their businesses. Caught in the frantic daily pace of running their organization, they never seem to find the time to step back and take a serious and brutally honest look at where their business is and where it is going. This is a frustrating and potentially dangerous situation to find yourself in.

However, committing to and setting aside time for reflection and planning is the solution to this predicament. Two full days a year for an in-depth planning retreat, and perhaps one day a quarter for monitoring and adjustment is all that is required to build and maintain an effective business plan. Now I can hear all of you screaming that you don’t have that kind of time available, but it would be my position that it is precisely because you are not proactively planning that you are so insanely busy constantly reacting.

Let me give you a quick example. I am often asked to teach programs on time management, to which I reply, “There is really no such thing as time management – there is only priority management.” All of the time management classes I have ever attended or taught focus on just two simple ideas:

A. Figure out what is absolutely most important – and do that first.
B. Write down everything in a clear and easily accessible format that is comfortable for you.

The first step is easy: priority management. The second step says get all of this information and appointments and ideas and tasks out of your head and down on paper (so you are not staying up all night worrying about what you might have forgotten) and put it into a format that is super easy for you to understand and maintain. Guess what? That is the magic formula for time management and business planning too. Figure out what is most important, put it down on paper, read it every day and follow it. Doesn’t seem that intimidating when I put it that way?

The goal here is not to write some 270-page document that is so comprehensive, complex and convoluted that no one can...
understand what they are truly supposed to be doing. A business plan will be hard to implement unless it is simple, specific, realistic and complete. Even if it is all these things, a good plan will need someone to follow up and check on it. Successful implementation of the plan depends on the human elements around it, particularly the process of commitment and involvement, and the tracking and follow-up that comes afterward. Here are some of the elements that will make a plan more likely to be successfully implemented:

Is the plan simple? Is it easy to understand and to act on? Does it communicate its contents easily and practically? Does it create commitment, coordination and consistency?

Is the plan specific? Are its objectives concrete and measurable? Does it include specific actions and activities, each with a specific date of completion, specific persons responsible and specific budgets?

Is the plan realistic? Are the sales goals, expense budgets, and milestone dates realistic? Nothing stifles implementation like unrealistic goals.

Is the plan complete? Does it include all the necessary elements — without a lot of extraneous stuff that isn’t important?

To that last point, the requirements of a business plan vary, depending on the context and there is no guarantee that the plan will work if it doesn’t cover the main bases. Which is exactly why I will be joining TCIA for TCI EXPO to present a session on strategic business planning. For one information packed day I will try to share with you everything I can about what it takes to build an effective strategic business plan. From understanding the difference between strategic thinking and strategic planning, to how to write a vision statement, we will cover a myriad of aspects on the topic of business planning. As part of the session I have also put together a detailed workbook full of tools, ideas and resources (including a customized sample business plan created specifically for TCIA). Hope to see you there, it promises to be a great session.

John Spence has delivered executive education programs to more than 300 organizations worldwide, from the top of the Fortune 50 to dozens of start-ups. He also serves as a guest lecturer on the topics of business strategy and leadership at several universities including Wharton, Rutgers, Cornell, Texas Tech and the University of Florida, and is the author of “Excellence by Design: Leadership,” which is available through www.treecareindustry.org.
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Retired Concert Pianist Loves Nature
She’s well off and well travelled and she’s all business when it comes to running her household. The children are grown with families of their own, and she and her husband look forward to visits from their six energetic grandchildren.

They’re retired, and while he golfs, she enjoys music, quilting, knitting, basketry and, most of all, gardening. The grounds surrounding their estate contain an orchard, extensive lawns, a pond, a scenic meadow, a groomed hedge, vegetable and flower gardens, and a woodland garden sheltered by century-old trees. She loves the calm, protected areas of the property and values the natural character and beauty of the forests and land for their elegant and comfortable accommodation. Her next project is to have selected areas of the grounds floodlit during the evening.

Cleanliness Next to Godliness
The demands of the property are significant. She used to employ a full-time groundskeeper that arranged all the contracting, but his health has forced him to retire and his son has moved away. She made a false start with a service recommended by a neighbor. The owner was pleasant and well dressed when he visited, but when his men came to work, three days after the promised time, they were slovenly. Their truck leaked oil on her drive, they left lunch wrappers behind and bits of twigs and brush on the pathways. When she called to ask them to come back, a young woman was curt with her. When she received a separate bill for the cleanup, she promptly fired them.

Does Her Homework
Later in life, she has studied interior design, fashion merchandising and, luckily, the internet at a local technical college. She uses the Internet to research services in her area that can help with the maintenance. She wants to employ a well-established company that has a good reputation. One that will treat her fairly and whose employees take pride in their work. She wants a company she can trust.

That’s why she’ll choose a company that is Accredited by the Tree Care Industry Association.

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Risk is the potential for injury. All trees and their parts carry risk; from the acorn on the sidewalk that can make us slip and fall, to that heavy branch that can break off and dent our car, to the old oak tree that can fall apart and crush us. Risk management involves “mitigating” – alleviating, moderating, reducing – that risk.

A “hazard tree” has a defect that creates an unreasonable level of risk to a target and requires action. Only after carefully evaluating the severity of the defect and measuring the size of the part and rating the value of the target can we identify a “hazard.” Then the question becomes, how do we mitigate that risk?

Risk posed by acorns is removed by sweeping them off the sidewalk. Risk posed by that heavy branch can be mitigated by light thinning and reduction cuts near the end, or that risk can be removed by removing the branch. But removing that branch increases the risk posed by the rest of the tree. That big wound on the trunk is open to decay. The bark on the inner tree is now vulnerable to sunscald. Nearby branches are newly exposed to strain from the wind, so they need to add tissue to reinforce themselves or they may break. The roots, too, are more stressed, because they have lost some shelter from sun and wind. The whole tree’s balance is changed. It makes less food for itself than it did before. So, did removing that branch mitigate risk, or increase it?

Arborists cannot remove all tree risk, unless we clear-cut the entire planet. Our job is to mitigate risk, by providing clearance for wires or roadways or cars, and maintaining health and stability. At times we must remove branches, or entire trees, but sometimes removing trees increases risk. When a client wants that big tree near the house cut down because they fear it, a few reminders are in order:

The worst-case scenario: Let’s assume that the tree uproots in a major storm and falls toward the house. First of all, setting wind exposure and other factors aside, the tree is more likely to fail away from the house, because construction damage, restricted root area and soil compaction tend to limit anchorage toward the house. If we still assume that the tree may fail toward the house, the closer to the house it is, the less velocity it will have, and the less damage it will cause. That 70-foot tall tree that’s 50 feet away will do more damage, so where does risk end? In the past, the Federal Emergency Management Agency recommended removing every tree that was tall enough to hit the house, but few homeowners – or arborists – will go along with that program.

Bad stubs

Even in 2005, many trees are topped to reduce the perception of risk. Topping cuts are made at locations predetermined by humans. They often leave stubs between branch nodes, which decay rapidly and do not close. They force the tree to respond with weakly attached sprouts, so many topping jobs increase the risk that they were intended to reduce. On normal pruning for branch removal, leaving a stub outside the branch collar creates a barrier to wound closure and a food source for decay organisms. If a tree hangs over the road enough to concern motorists, first look for a lateral with a natural target such as a branch collar. Poor regrowth from decaying wood at topping cuts and large internodal stubs will create a greater risk.

This Yoshino cherry once hung over the road concerning motorists. Regrowth from decaying wood at topping cuts will create a greater risk.
Good stubs

When trees lose major portions of their canopies to storms, following the standard rule by cutting broken branches back to their origin or a major lateral can increase risk. Larger wounds are more likely to decay than smaller ones. Bark that is suddenly exposed to the sun can be “scalded.” By making the tree more lopsided, we make it less stable. Removing entire limbs because their ends are broken results in less photosynthetic area, thus less food for the tree. Leaving good stubs at nodes can lessen decay, sunscald, imbalance, food loss – and risk. Storm-damaged branches often can be cleaned back to stubs at the first good node, where there is a branch protection zone and dormant buds to carry on good growth.

Bad rips

When co-dominant stems and branches fail, the injury can extend far beyond the original defect, often catastrophically. This is why it’s so important to identify and mitigate these defects ahead of time – by cabling, bracing, subordinating or thinning. One co-dominant can be removed safely if it is small enough for the wound to close. If not, reducing it until it is no more than a side branch – “subordinating” it – can be a permanent mitigation of the risk of failure. Co-dominant tear-outs in older trees are, of course, slower to seal over. When the wounds are exposed to the sun and rain, callus tissue is slower to form, since more of its waxy suberin (which provides a waterproof coating) can be dissolved. Straighter-grained species such as pine and ash are more likely to have bigger wounds from co-dominant failure, and these wounds are more likely to crack and fail than cross-grained species such as maple and sweetgum.

Repaired rips

If a tree responds to a co-dominant tear-out with good woundwood formation, this must be factored into the strength-loss assessment. Woundwood has been measured to be 40 percent stronger than normal wood. Necessary mitigation steps are often limited to cleaning out debris that has been caught in the bottom of the wound, trimming the jagged wood and “tracing” the loose or jagged bark. The goal is to minimize the “pocket” that catches water and infectious material, speeding closure. Depending on weight and wind exposure, light thinning or reduction cuts at the branch ends to lessen strain on the defect may be advisable, to further mitigate the risk.

The first thing property owners are concerned about is safety, and understandably so. Each person has their own definitions of how much tree risk is acceptable, depending on how much they value the tree, what condition the tree is in, and how much they value the nearby target. Risk management is a straightforward way to advertise, prioritize, and sell tree care services. It all starts with inspection and assessment of trees, best done on a regular basis. Basic references, such as the book (Evaluating Tree Defects: A Field Guide WE SELL IT) and TCIA’s VIDEO on “Hazard Tree Risk Assessment & Mitigation for Tree Workers,” outline ways to systematically inspect trees. The US Forest Service also has a manual on “Urban Tree Risk Management,” free for downloading at www.na.fs.fed.us/spfo/pubs/uf/utrmm/

Armed with basic knowledge and their own experience and common sense, inspectors can adopt the owner’s mindset on acceptable levels of risk and deliver a tree care program that mitigates risk while increasing the tree resource. In essence, tree risk management and plant health care are really the same thing. Inspection and monitoring take vigilance. Responding to tree health and safety issues requires action. For the arborist and the owner to both accept that risk is a fact of life, that you cannot mitigate that risk by tree removal alone, requires bravery. The words of Patrick Henry again apply to tree care: “We are not weak if we make a proper use of those means which the God of Nature has placed in our power ... the battle, sir, is not to the strong alone. It is to the vigilant, the active, the brave.”
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Tree climber wanted for est. tree care co., 5 yrs min exp, full time, top pay, cert arborist a plus, must be motivated, drug free, team player, & have a valid drivers license. Call Acorn Tree Care, (770) 754-0806 Cumming/Alpharetta/Atlanta, Georgia.

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Superior Landscaping & Lawn Service, Inc. is one of the leading Landscape Contractors in South Florida. Established for over 25 years, we are on the cutting edge of our industry. Our arbor service division is currently hiring certified arborists, managers, supervisors and groundsmen. Call Sal Rassi at (305) 634-0717.

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Candidate must have woody plant/arbor background, pesticide license and 5+ years of field experience. Position requires creative, industrious person who can lead and teach others. Excellent benefits, matched 401(k), Health ins., 25 paid day off, $55-65K, incentive plan. Resume to Lueders Environmental, Inc., 27 Brook Street, Medfield, MA 02052, (508) 359-9905 ext. 111, e-mail careers@luedersco.com.

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<th>Website Only</th>
<th>Website Only + Photo</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model Number</th>
<th>Part No.</th>
<th>Knife Description &amp; Size</th>
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<td>BC1000</td>
<td>KCH20109</td>
<td>Double Edge 9&quot; x 4-1/2&quot; x 5/8&quot;</td>
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<td>BC1800XL</td>
<td>KCH20112</td>
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<td>BC1220-BC1250</td>
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## Morbark

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<td>100, 200, 290</td>
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<td>10, 13, 17, 2050</td>
<td>KCH40001</td>
<td>Double Edge 10-1/2&quot; x 5&quot; x 1/2&quot;</td>
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## Brush Bandit

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<td>90XP, 280XP</td>
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<td>100XP-250XP</td>
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<td>250XP, 254XP after '01</td>
<td>KCH10101</td>
<td>Double Edge 7-1/4&quot; x 4-1/2&quot; x 1/2&quot;</td>
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<td>1890 Intimidator</td>
<td>KCH20103</td>
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## Asplundh

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<td>16&quot; Drum</td>
<td>KCH30002</td>
<td>Single Edge 16&quot; x 3&quot; x 3/8&quot;</td>
<td>$19.75</td>
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</tbody>
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Kinnucan Tree Experts & Landscaping Company located in Lake Bluff, IL, is searching for a Tree Care Sales Territory Manager. Qualified applicants must possess excellent oral and written communication skills, arborist certification, and minimum 3 years' industry sales experience, degreed individual preferred. Must be driven to grow designated territory. Excellent base + commission. Benefit package includes medical, 401(k), tuition assistance, paid vacation and more. For immediate consideration, e-mail resume to kris@kinnucan.com or fax to (847) 234-3260. View us at www.kinnucan.com
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David F. Anderson

When we talk about pesticide safety and improving pesticide safety, what we are really looking at are three areas:

- The applicator, because that is the person most exposed to the material. They are exposed to it day in and day out in the course of their job duties.
- The clients and the general public who trust us to apply pesticides in the safest manner possible.
- The environment, especially the natural systems that still exist in some of our urban and suburban landscapes.

Applicator safety: The hazards to the applicator are really a combination of the amount of exposure and the toxicity of the material used. We can reduce exposure through good training, use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and careful application practices. We can reduce toxicity by doing our homework and selecting the least toxic materials that get the job done. We can use tools and equipment that are specifically designed to help minimize the exposure to the applicator.

Client and public safety: If you think about it, when our clients ask us to come out and inspect their property and look at their trees for pest or disease problems, they are not really asking us to come out and apply pesticides; they are asking us to come out and solve a problem and if that requires the use of a pesticide they are trusting us to apply materials that are appropriate and safe for their landscape, environment and family. There are 2,700 chemicals that California lists as hazardous, so there is no end to the possible problems that you could have, which means we have a lot of responsibility in terms of selecting materials.

Environmental protection: Take precautions to avoid drift or spills onto sensitive areas. A few areas that we service have streams that still support salmon populations. Where properties back up to a lake, stream or wetland, leave an untreated buffer zone to insure that material does not drift or wash into the sensitive area. Neighboring farms, orchards, vegetable gardens and schools should be protected with an untreated buffer zone as well.

Let’s look at specifics

Pesticide Selection: With the number and variety of products available to us today, it is worth doing some research before you buy. Any time you add a new pesticide to your program it requires more training for the applicator, more secure storage space, more record keeping (MSDS, labels, inventories) and container disposal. Each material you select should be considered carefully.

Primarily we want to use the least toxic material that will provide control but also need to consider the method of application, formulation and even the container size and design. For example, if you need to treat mature elms along a street to control elm leaf beetle, look at materials that can be trunk or soil injected as well as foliar options. Anyone who has foliar sprayed 100-foot-plus trees knows that some drift and over-spray is likely if not inevitable. Materials that can be trunk or soil injected are more concentrated, and in some cases more acutely toxic, but the reduced exposure to the applicator and the environment keep the hazard to a minimum.

Mixing and loading: This is the point at which the applicator has greatest exposure...
methods and materials, foliar applications are still an important tool in plant health care. The first really tall tree I ever sprayed dripped for probably 10 minutes after the application. The area under and around the tree was soaked. My supervisor looked at me and said "you got really good coverage BUT every drop of material that hit the ground was wasted". Not only was that material wasted, it didn’t belong anywhere but on the tree.

A few years ago, the Bartlett Tree Research Lab took a real world look at drift and drift management and came up with some key concepts. First of all you have to get as close as possible to the target – don’t try to spray something from far away. Secondly, too much pressure means too much drift. Applicators have a tendency to run at higher pressures than are really required creating more drift and overspray.

My early experiences with spraying trees were pretty intuitive. When we came to a really big tree we would just crank up the pressure. This worked OK and gave us some additional height some of the time, but it also created a tremendous amount of fine mist that drifted wherever the wind wanted to take it.

The research done at the lab involved spraying large trees at night using lights that illuminated the spray columns. The effects of pressure and tip changes became very clear. Required heights could be achieved using lower pressures with larger tip sizes minimizing the mist and drift. The column produced by a #14 tip at 350 psi was higher than the column produced by a #12 tip at 400 psi.

In order to facilitate staying close to the target we now install a ball valve between...
the end of the hose and the gun or on the gun itself. This allows the applicator to cut down the volume, and effectively pressure, without going back to the truck. The applicator can treat a 50 foot tree, close down the ball valve and then treat small shrubs from close range with minimal drift or over-spray.

Drift management with wind: I am not going to tell you that all of our applicators carry wind gages, but they are useful for training people. Experienced pesticide applicators know right away when they get out of the truck and feel that little breeze how much it will affect the spray column, or whether or not they are going to be able to do that job that day depending upon the type of application. Wind gages are handy for training and can show a new applicator just what a 5 mph wind can do to their spray column.

Spill prevention and response: Spill prevention is more than just carrying a spill kit on your truck. You need to be trained in how to prevent spills and prepared to clean up spills if they occur. Here, again, it is important to look at the process.

Applicators can prevent spills by not carrying open containers from the storage area to the truck. Open containers should never be raised above shoulder height during the mixing and loading process. Use a secondary containment system to capture any leaks in the storage facility and on the vehicle. Plastic containment pallets are an easy way to provide secondary containment for your storage shed. In some areas there are specific requirements for secondary containment capacity (i.e. 50 percent of the aggregate of all liquids stored). On the truck, use plastic basins to line the base of your storage box. This will help keep containers upright and contain any leaks.

Keep the hose ends capped. Application equipment is becoming more versatile but also more complex. Multiple tanks, multiple hose reels and banks of control valves are now common on our application vehicles. Always keep a spray gun, fertilization wand or just a ball valve attached to the end of each hose. This prevents material in the hose from dripping all over your truck and it could prevent a major spill if the wrong valve(s) is left open.

Understand the importance of safety valves. Safety valves are different than control valves. Safety valves are typically located at the outlet of each tank, and in front of each hose reel. Should an accident or malfunction occur, these valves can be closed to stop material from spilling. Keep in mind the tank valves must remain open during normal operation or the pump will be damaged. Zip-ties can be used to hold...
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When working with pesticides, fertilizers and commercial motor vehicles, minor spills and drips occur. When surprised by a leak, your preparations will determine the extent of the incident. Training is not enough. Preparedness involves having the right equipment at hand when needed. For service vehicles, equipment needs usually occur in the field.

TCIA has configured spill responder kits that will fit behind truck seats for easy access and storage. Kit components provide both tools and PPE that will be needed to begin taking action as a first responder. An Inventory Maintenance and Restocking Guide is included to ease administration and maintenance.

**Pesticide Spill Responder Kit**

Price: $19.95 (TCIA Member price: $110.95)

For vehicles transporting or applying pesticides. Absorbs approximately 65 gals.

(Please call for custom configurations or fleet prices.)

Avoid transporting large volumes of mixed material. One advantage of shifting toward an integrated pest management (IPM) approach to plant health care is that it has allowed us to get away from transporting large volumes of mixed material. I always felt a little concerned driving down the road with 900 gallons of pesticide mixed up in the tank. My spill kit is going to be of limited value in a large volume spill situation. Now we are able to mix smaller amounts at the site of application using the largest tank as a fresh water supply and one of the smaller tanks as a mix tank.

Carry a well designed spill kit. There are many types of spill kits available. A spill kit designed to pick up hydraulic oil won’t be much help with a dilute pesticide spill. Training in the use of the spill kit is just as important as the kit itself. Applicators must be confident in their abilities to handle spills or the kit may not get put to use when it’s needed.

Dave Anderson has worked as a climber, crew leader, production supervisor and an arborist representative for Bartlett Tree Experts. He is currently the western division safety and training coordinator for Bartlett Tree Experts.
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Hot off the presses … TCIA in partnership with the Better Business Bureau has produced a consumer-oriented brochure entitled, “How to Choose a Tree Care Company.” The brochure is designed for, and available to TCIA member companies to use in their marketing efforts.

The first-of-its-kind brochure is the result of a meeting between the CEO of the BBB Council in Washington, D.C., and TCIA president and CEO Cynthia Mills followed by a lengthy collaborative process between Robert Rouse, TCIA director of Accreditation, and BBB representatives. The brochure outlines several important points for consumers on proper tree care:

- **The Role of Trees and Tree Care Companies** describes the benefits of trees in the urban environment and, more importantly, the services tree companies offer, including pruning, removal, fertilization, disease and insect control, etc.
- **Industry Standards** introduces A300, topping, climbing spikes and the long-term drawbacks of bad tree care.
- **Safety and Insurance** discusses the dangers of tree work, the needs for expensive insurance by companies, and warns consumers against hiring uninsured companies.
- **Recommendations, References** details what to look for in a professional company.
- **Indications of Professionalism in Tree Care** urges consumers to look for professional credentials, including TCIA Accreditation, certification and memberships in TCIA, ISA and ASCA.

With all the bad press too many tree care companies earn – especially after storms – consumers are often concerned about how to hire a reputable company. Increasingly, they look to the Better Business Bureau for advice. When they do, they can be assured that TCIA member companies, especially accredited companies, will be there to serve them with knowledge and integrity.

To order these brochures, call 1-800-733-2622 or visit www.treecareindustry.org.

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**Member Benefit:** Insight Direct will contribute 2.5 percent of your total software and add-on purchases (excluding third party sales) toward your TCIA renewal dues. An additional 2.5 percent will be contributed toward future development of TCIA educational and safety programs.

**Example:** If a member company purchases $2,000 in software products directly from Insight Direct, the software company will send TCIA a credit of $50 to be deposited into your membership account. An additional $50 will offset costs of safety and training products developed by TCIA. Credits accumulate throughout the 12 months of membership and when you receive your annual renewal statement, the total credits will be subtracted from your membership dues. Thanks to the support of Insight Direct, your company can reduce its annual dues while helping offset the costs involved with keeping the industry safe.

**Requirements:** To receive a dues credit, your company must order software directly from Insight Direct. Third party resellers do not apply.

To learn more about how your company can benefit from these and other TCIA affinity programs, please call 1-800-733-2622.
The Voice for Trees in the states

The Tree Care Industry Association took its message to Seattle last month for the National Conference of State Legislatures, an organization that serves the legislators and staffs in state capitals. NCSSL provides research, technical assistance and opportunities for policymakers to exchange ideas on the most pressing state issues. Mark Garvin, TCIA’s vice president for public policy & communications, was joined by David Marren, vice president of regulatory affairs for the Bartlett Tree Expert Company.


Why would TCIA attend the meeting? Because at the state level, 195,000 pieces of legislation are introduced biennially. Of these, 45,000 become law. Increasingly, legislation is introduced at the state level on arborist licensing or restricting pesticides, fertilizers and herbicides.

Almost 20 percent of the nation’s legislators attended the meeting. Overall, this select group represents the most influential state lawmakers in the nation. To amplify our voice as your advocates on these issues, TCIA took the opportunity to get your message to the right people. Over three days at the trade show, we discussed our message face-to-face with state leaders, broadened our contacts with state officials, and presented our safety products and services to the people who influence buying decisions.

TCIA is constantly looking for ways to increase the voice of tree care in state capitals. Any members with contacts or personal friendships with state senators, representatives or those who work in state government on green industry issues are encouraged to contact Mark Garvin at 1-800-733-2622 or garvin@treecareindustry.org.

Info for your business: TCIA Wage & Benefit Survey

This year’s expanded TCIA Wage & Benefit Survey includes demographic information you have requested, including sales levels and expanded benefits. Your participation is more important than ever!

The time you take to fill out this survey could benefit your company in employee recruitment and retention. By helping to compile accurate figures on wages, benefits and sales, you will gain an accurate picture against which you can evaluate your company’s wage and benefit offerings.

When the information is tallied, we, the Tree Care Industry Association, will have the most accurate picture of our industry available anywhere.

Please help us advance your business and become a stronger advocate by filling out the survey. Greater participation will make the results more meaningful, so please return it today.

For a survey form, call TCIA at 1-800-733-2622.
Peter Gerstenberger, TCIA’s senior advisor to the president for safety, compliance & standards, celebrated his 20th anniversary with NAA/TCIA in September. Staff threw him a surprise party at the office and had arranged for Peter’s family to join in the celebration.

Fresh out of a two-year stint as a field trainer with Davey Environmental Services and with a master’s degree in plant pathology from Iowa State University, Gerstenberger started out at the National Arborist Association as administrative assistant and one of four employees. He was quickly promoted to safety director and over the years also served as TCI magazine editor and vice president of products and services before taking on his current senior advisor position.

In addition to making a career of the NAA/TCIA, Peter also made it his family – literally. He met his wife, the former Susan Curtis, while she was working at the NAA office as an executive secretary in 1987. They have been married 17 years and have two children, Jon, 15 and Colin, 11.

Cynthia Mills, TCIA president and CEO, had invited several past NAA/TCIA officers and board members to share their congratulations to Peter via e-mail. Several responded and some of their notes were read aloud to Peter during the office celebration.

“Congratulations on 20 years with NAA/TCIA,” wrote Rusty Girouard, business manager at Madison Tree Care & Landscaping, Inc. in Milford, Ohio, and a former board chair. “How could it possibly be that long? It has been a pleasure to work with you over my own 19 year involvement with this great association. What makes it great is the people who are dedicated to the work it does and to the members who support it so well. You have always come through when we needed you and put your whole heart into the projects. When Bob (Robert Felix, NAA executive director) passed away, you were one of the first ones to step up and take on new responsibilities to help us through some tough times. You are great at what you do and have a wealth of knowledge about the industry. Safety and education are the two most important components of bringing this industry to the level of professionalism it deserves. You are one of the few people with an opportunity to greatly influence that process.

“It has been a pleasure to watch you grow personally and professionally,” wrote Girouard. “I know that Susan and the boys are very proud of you. Keep up the good work!”

“Congratulations on your anniversary,” said Mark J. Tobin, chairman and CEO at at Hartney Greymont Inc. In Needham, Mass., and a former board chair. “On behalf of the membership and the profession thank you for your guidance and help and friendship over the past 20 years. Think how many arborists and families were spared pain and anguish because accidents and fatalities were avoided because of your teaching and leadership.”

“Art Batson and the Lucas Tree family would like to say “THANK-YOU” for all you have done to help us through thick and thin all these years,” wrote Arthur Batson, president at Lucas
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which you were involved was the On Target employee, her heart not yet having been stolen
director and your dear wife, Sue, was an NAA were presidents, the president was executive
when you started, TCIA was the NAA, chairs
NAA president ('93-'94). “Of course, back
Forest City Tree Protection Co., Inc. and former
TCIA!” wrote Lauren S. Lanphear, president at
walked with us over the course of a wonderful
have such a dedicated employee who has
The NAA/TCIA has been very fortunate to
friend and a good friend of the tree industry.
does that now.”
“I’ve had the pleasure of participating,
observing and being with Peter at numerous
functions the entire 20 years. I consider him my
experience was nearly topped by Lorenzo Pita’s
ribbon-cutting ceremony at TCI EXPO ‘93 in
National Cemetery in Oct ‘93. Of course, that
ed by our inaugural Day of Service at Arlington
highlighted during my tenure as NAA president, highlight-
ed greatly from your dedicated efforts on its
glove.
“It was a pleasure to work with you closely
during my tenure as NAA president, highlight-
ed by our inaugural Day of Service at Arlington National Cemetery in Oct ‘93. Of course, that
experience was nearly topped by Lorenzo Pita’s
ribbon-cutting ceremony at TCI EXPO ‘93 in
Cleveland. (Lorenzo was actually Loren in dis-
guise, and Pita was an acronym – we’ll let you
guess what it means)
“Seriously, the tree care industry has benefitted
greatly from your dedicated efforts on its behalf over these past 20 years. I consider
myself fortunate to have worked with you closely in your first decade with our trade asso-
ciation, and more importantly, consider myself blessed to count you as not only an industry peer, but a personal friend. Again, congratulations! I look forward to your 30 year celebration in 2015!”
“Having known Peter and his competency and expertise in safety issues, OSHA and the
tree care business, it is hard to imagine the organization without him,” conveyed Paul
McFarland, chairman of McFarland Landscape Services Inc. in Philadelphia, Pa., and former
board president and chair of the old NAA Standard Practices Committee. “He is an easy
to person to work with and I know he helped “prop” me up during my presidency. Best
Wishes for your anniversary and I hope you celebrate many more with TCIA.”
“I also can’t imagine TCIA without Peter Gerstenberger,” wrote Jeannie Houser, vice
president and general manager at McFarland Landscape Services Inc. and current TCIA sen-
or director. “He’s the go-to guy with the answers we need. I can not remember ever ask-
ing about a problem or an issue we were having that he didn’t come through for us. Or steer us
in the right direction. He’s also helpful and friendly. It’s great to have someone like him on staff to depend on. I truly hope he’s with us for a very long time to come.”
“Congratulations on 20 years with NAA/TCIA,” said John Hendrickson, CEO of
the Care of Trees Inc. in Wheeling, Ill., and former NAA board president. “Time flies
when you are having fun doesn’t it? I have had the pleasure of knowing and working with you
during that entire career, particularly since our interest in safe work practices overlaps as
much as it does. We have made a lot of progress but there is still so much to do isn’t there? I think this is an issue along with train-
ing that we will never be able to say it is done as there are new people and ideas always com-
ing into the profession. There are also always some new external pressures that we will have to deal with.

“Your career spanning two decades has seen a lot of change within the association, starting with Bob and now with Cynthia. You have suffered under numerous boards and you still have to deal with me ... You have made a tremendous impact on the profession to become better and to stand up for what is right. Best wishes on the next 20.”

Fittingly, the day after the office party, Peter noticed a tree crew working near the TCIA
offices without proper personal protection equipment (no hard hats, goggles, etc.)
and using unsafe practices (standing in a tree without being tied in while using a chain saw
overhead) and took immediate action.
Relishing the challenge of helping to transform the industry, even if it happens one company at a time, Peter’s next 20 years have begun …
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Things I’ve learned(Sometimes the hard way)

By Erin Carlock

In the March 2004 issue of TCI, a Mr. (Eric L.) Graefen wrote a list of lessons he had learned and said he would like to hear of some other people’s experiences with trees. So, here are some of the interesting and amazing things I have learned while working for my dad’s business.

1. When dad says “Oh, no,” it is usually not a good sign.
2. White-tailed hornets are nasty.
3. Hornets DO NOT like to be disturbed.
4. Chippers can make quick work of hornet nests if you can get them in the hopper.
5. If you are allergic to bee stings, you should stay away from bees.
6. When a person is allergic to bee stings and is being chased by a really mad white-tailed hornet he can run really fast.
7. If you want lunch, you better bring it.
8. Don’t wait on for dad for a lunch break or you might have to wait until dinner to eat!
9. Rope bags are heavy.
10. Never drop limbs over loose rope and rope bags. They are hard to untangle (and can damage the rope).
11. When a hose bursts on the fertilizer tank you will get really wet.
12. Organic fertilizer does not taste good.
13. When a long, thin branch in the chipper feed wheels slaps you, it really hurts.
14. When the cable from the chipper isn’t long enough, use a couple of choker chains! It works every time!
15. Tractors are very useful pieces of equipment.
16. Forwarder trailers make life a lot easier.
17. Bucket trucks will dig trenches in the right conditions.
18. Skidders with flat tires are not very safe.
19. Wire brushing the paint off trucks makes you look like “rust babies.”
20. Pintle hooks are on the back of trucks so that you won’t dent the truck.
21. Some people are better at backing trucks up than others.
22. It is possible to hang glide with a hoop building that hasn’t been tied down.
23. Looking at equipment with dad can take a LONG time.
24. When dad asks for a wrench, always get a size larger and smaller as well as the requested wrench.
25. It is impossible NOT to get dirty while working.
26. When there is a full tank of fertilizer on the back of a truck you can feel it rock as you drive.
27. Figure eights are very neat pieces of metal.
28. Some people think it is fun to steal construction cones.
29. Some people can’t read or obey caution signs that have pictures on them.
30. People in cars don’t always stop, even when there are tree branches falling all around them.
31. And finally, the best way to stop a line of cars so you can cross the road is to wave a bright orange flag and they will stop immediately.

I hope you enjoyed this list of some of the things that happen in a day working in and around trees.

Erin Carlock, 15, helps out as a ground person at Landcare Enterprises in Chesterton, IN.

TCI will pay $100 for published 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, 3 Perimeter Road, Unit 1, Manchester, NH 03101, or staruk@treecareindustry.org.
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