



**April 1, 2020**

**Re: Covid-19**

**To the members of the Prairie Chapter**

Hope everyone is staying healthy.

So far, all three provinces in the Prairie Chapter have named “landscaping/construction” as an essential service and from what I’m getting from their definitions, this includes tree care. Hazard Prevention type tree care duties also appear as support services in many other categories including but not limited to: personal safety/protection of property, transportation, construction, utilities and telecommunications.

When planning your work schedule, please consider that many people are laid off and out of work and may become critical of others that are able to work and continue to make a living. Not everyone will see arboriculture as an essential service. Be prepared for some criticism.

It may be a good time to think about changing up your work plan and reprioritize the aesthetic-type pruning and shrub care to the bottom of the list and focus on hazard abatement/prevention pruning and removals. This work is necessary and easier to justify at this particular time.

In addition, if high risk work can be postponed, it should be postponed. The last place anyone really wants to be right now is in a hospital.

The safest place for us all to be is at home.

When deciding what the ‘go forward’ is for your company, please consider:

### **Three Essential Tree Maintenance Categories**

#### **1) Keeping people and property safe – hazard tree pruning and removal**

Removal of hazards, such as trees or tree parts that may injure people, fall into public areas or houses, businesses, or infrastructure.

Emergency and storm response

Tree care companies play an important role in keeping our communities safe.

#### **2) The protection of infrastructure**

Qualified arborists work daily to make sure that vegetation in and around the infrastructure that people depend on, such as utility and transmission lines, telecommunications equipment, roads and bridges, and other infrastructure needs to be maintained to ensure there are no interruptions of service or other issues. These operations are essential and need to continue especially in times of emergency.

#### **3) Protection against the spread of invasive and/or injurious pests**

The threat of invasive and injurious pests cannot be understated. This may include but is not limited to: the emerald ash borer and Dutch elm disease. Management of invasive pests should continue to help protect the urban forest and mitigate the creation of hazard trees from these infestations

### **Partial list of work that you may want to include as essential**

- Imminent hazard tree removal or removal of a dangerous tree;
- Pruning of dead, dying, or dangerous limbs;
- Support services to essential services as required;
- Treatment for invasive insects which if left untreated would rapidly destroy a tree causing a hazard;
- Utility line clearance;
- Road safety clearance;
- Cabling or bracing a hazardous tree;
- Storm damage response
- Removal of fire damaged or fuel trees in a fire hazard area;
- Assessment of hazard trees or pest issues for the purposes of removal or treatment as described above.

### **Partial list of work that may be considered non-essential work and could be postponed**

- Shrub trimming or pruning;
- Routine tree pruning;
- Routine tree removal when no abnormal safety issues exist;
- Vista pruning;
- Tree or shrub planting;
- Installation of irrigation;
- Fertilization;
- Pest management that does not involve invasive pests, borers, or disease that can rapidly destroy trees.

**If you decide to keep working, its important to establish a Covid-19 Prevention Protocol to keep your employees and customers safe.**

### **Safe Work Practice**

- You are encouraged to put together a safe work practice and or code of conduct

Encourage your employees to practice:

#### **Cleanliness**

- Wash your hands frequently
- Consider putting alcohol-based or anti-virus hand cleaner in all work vehicles and shop
- Alcohol based/anti-virus cleaners available to wipe down all hand equipment

#### **Maintain physical distancing**

- Whenever possible, maintain at least 2 metres distance between yourself and others
- Consider adding additional transportation vehicles to provide for social distancing on route to the job
- Consider making, the disinfecting of surfaces in transport vehicles, a part of the start up/cleanup

#### **Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth**

#### **Respiratory hygiene**

- Cover your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately.

#### **If you or your employees have fever, cough and difficulty breathing**

- stay home.
- Seek medical care early

Always consult Federal and Provincial Health Authorities for the most up to date Prevention Information.

**Compiled from protocols and guidelines suggestions from ISA Ontario, WHO, ISA, TCIA**