

## **ELECTRICAL HAZARD SAFETY AND TREE CARE**

Each year, thousands of workers are injured or killed because of accidents resulting from electrical hazards. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA ) mandates that tree care workers receive electrical hazard training, but does not police companies to ensure that training is provided. However, an accident investigation that reveals untrained workers will lead to severe fines. TCIA has developed an Electrical Hazard Awareness Program (EHAP) for the tree care industry , and offers materials and teacher training for qualified arborists. In July, Mead Tree & Turf Care sent staff arborist Rich Godwin to attend EHAP instructor training at the ISA yearly conference in St. Louis, MO. As an ISA Certified Arborist and Certified Tree Safety Professional(CTSP), Rich was qualified to receive EHAP teacher training and is currently conducting EHAP training for all tree workers at Mead Tree & Turf Care. Once training has been performed and documented, a yearly review is required for employees to maintain EHAP certification.

EHAP is designed to familiarize arborists and tree workers with the equipment utility companies use to provide electricity, and the hazards associated with tree care and utility lines. All utility lines above ground and below ground are considered energized with potential fatal voltages; this includes telephone and cable lines. The EHAP program consists of an orientation video as well as 6 instructional units and tests. Participants are also required to perform practice aerial rescue and to hold current CPR and first aid certification. Once all requirements have been met an enrollee will receive a certificate of completion that is valid for one year. Annual refresher training is required to maintain certification. The certification for EHAP through TCIA is to train non-line clearance arborists and tree workers how to recognize utility hardware and understand the current that flows through a given system. It does not allow workers to operate within the minimum approach distance of 10 feet for utility lines, or more for higher voltage lines. All companies that perform tree care should meet safety compliance requirements that pertain to EHAP training.

Although safety training is primarily focused on the well-being of employees, customers can benefit from peace of mind knowing their tree care company considers safety on the job a first priority.