



The Connecticut Tree Protective Association, Inc.

*58 Old Post Road, PO Box 356, Northford, Connecticut 06472-0356
203-484-2512 (voice and fax) – 888-919-2872 (toll free in-state) • www.CTPA.org*

The Connecticut Tree Protective Association Urges Caution Regarding Tree Work and Supports the Arborist License

(Northford, CT - November 26, 2011) The Connecticut Tree Protective Association urges Connecticut residents to be very careful when hiring tree workers following the recent storms. The amount of downed wood and the extensive number of trees damaged might encourage a property owner to act quickly, but, unless there is an immediate hazard, quick action is not always the best action. Many trees that appear to be heavily damaged can be saved. If trees are damaged, property owners should consider the long-term health of the tree as part of any tree work to be done. They should also consider whether that work will cause the tree to become unsafe at some point in the future. The best way to ensure safe work beneficial to the tree is to hire a Connecticut licensed arborist who is also properly insured and who has the equipment and other resources to do the job correctly.

There have been recent reports that the arborist licensing requirement under the Arborist Law has been suspended, or relaxed. Sources within the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) deny these reports. These sources indicate that the DEEP looked closely at the law and determined that, in situations in which there is an immediate hazard, the Arborist Law does not apply. In those circumstances, when the hazard is clear and immediate, such as a large and broken storm-damaged limb hanging over a part of a house, then removal of that limb is considered to be hazard mitigation and is not arboriculture. Any additional work on the tree, however, such as any pruning beyond that necessary to remove the broken and dangerous limb back to the next largest branch, would be considered arboriculture and so would fall under the Arborist Law.

The Arborist Law was never suspended or relaxed in the wake of the recent storms. Under the Law, an arborist license is still needed to 'advertise, solicit or contract' to do arboriculture. Residents are advised that anyone who tells them otherwise is not aware of the law.

This is important information for property owners, as this can help them avoid some of the worst of the schemes being promoted by unscrupulous operators following the storm. Property owners should be wary of contractors who go door to door soliciting work. They should also be on their guard if an individual or company is unwilling to provide a written contract or requires cash up front, in advance of any work being done. In no case should a climber be allowed to use climbing spikes to climb a live tree, other than to assist in the removal of that tree. If a contractor seems over-eager to remove all or large parts of a tree, it is best to seek a second opinion.

A property owner should always check the credentials of the individual or company who is soliciting to do the tree work, and should always ask for written proof that the individual or company has adequate insurance covering liability and workman's compensation. If the

contractor does not have verifiable credentials, then it is recommended that the contractor not be hired. If the tree work involves any pruning, diagnosing or extensive evaluation of the tree's condition, then the individual should be required to show an arborist license. If the contractor does not have adequate insurance, the situation could become even worse. If the insurance is inadequate, liability might be shifted onto the property owner, making him or her responsible should damage or injury occur, even to people who are working for the contractor.

The Connecticut Tree Protective Association asserts that, if the property owner values his or her trees, they should only hire someone who is licensed as an arborist in Connecticut. As living organisms, trees have it built into their genetic code the ability to respond to storms. Trees are often able to recover and thrive, despite suffering major damage, if handled correctly in the aftermath of a storm. At the same time, those trees that are too heavily damaged, for which the outlook is not good, should be removed.

A property owner should make this an informed decision with the assistance of a licensed arborist. This arborist will be able to understand the differences among trees and explain the options available to the property owner. Individuals not licensed by the State of Connecticut are limited in the services they can offer and often will limit the discussion to the services that they can offer, such as the full removal of the tree.

The Connecticut Tree Protective Association is an educational non-profit organization with over 800 members. It has been in existence since 1922, and is a major supporter of the arborist license. Information on how to hire an arborist is included on their website: www.CTPA.org.