

## Summary of Tree Expert and Tree Care Operators Licensing Act

**Problem:** Statistics show the **tree care industry has fatal accidents at 10 times the average** for all industries. **New Jersey has had 41 fatalities in the last 10 years** (2000-2009) and countless serious injuries. The lack of proper employee training and companies doing tree care work as a secondary part of their business are major reasons for the accidents.

**Legislation:** The law will require businesses doing tree care work to register with the Department of Environmental Protection, Board of Tree Experts (Board), and train their employees in the safe operation of equipment and the maintenance of a safe work area.

This law will allow the Board to identify and communicate directly to all companies doing tree care work and provide opportunities for worker safety information and materials to be disseminated. The training requirement will ensure that employees have regular safety instruction and bring about the reduction of injuries and fatalities to tree care workers.

**Problem:** **The public is being cheated by unscrupulous companies doing tree care work**, many of which are not classified as tree care companies. The Better Business Bureau's 2002 report card showed that tree care ranked in the top 8% in the complaint category and that disputes were resolved at a D-minus rating.

**Legislation:** The law requires that businesses be registered and allows for the Board to suspend or revoke business registrations, individual licenses or to initiate proceedings for civil penalties.

This law will give consumers an effective method to resolve complaints by requiring tree care company registration and empowering the Board to take action. Registration will allow the Board to communicate directly to registered firms to resolve complaints or problems. They will be able to remedy complaints against both registered and unregistered tree care companies that are uncooperative or seek to defraud the public by revoking business registrations or instituting civil penalties.

**Problem:** **Poor quality tree work** is being done throughout New Jersey that **puts the public in danger**, both now and in the future and shortens the lifespan and benefits derived from trees.

**Legislation:** The law requires companies to have at least one person be licensed, allows the Board to adopt industry standards, requires licensed individuals to obtain continuing education units and creates remedies to address companies or individuals that do substandard work.

The licensing provision will help create a better trained and more knowledgeable work force and continuing education will keep tree experts abreast of new techniques, equipment and research findings. The adoption and enforcement of standards will improve tree health and longevity and decrease the creation of hazardous trees in the long run.