

EAB Stories and Lessons Learned—

Learning and Sharing How Communities Are Responding to Emerald Ash Borer



Part IV: Removal

“City crews were set up and trained mostly for tree trimming, not removal. They only did 10 removals a year before EAB struck.” — During the initial stages of EAB infestation, the City of Westland was able to remove the dead ash trees, grind the stumps and even seed the affected areas. Towards the end, all they could hope to do was to top off the trees at 12 feet, thus avoiding the safety concerns of an entirely dead standing tree. Their tree crew became highly skilled as they progressed from removing only ten trees a year to removing 4½ trees a day. Even then, Westland could not keep up with all the dying ash. They understood the advantages of removing the trees while they were still green.

They wanted to stay ahead of the curve and not become entirely overwhelmed. Westland decided to contract out some of their removals. Through this process they found a simple yet ingenious way to lower the cost of ash removals by \$275-\$475 per tree. When they started, they bid out in lots of 500 trees or more but soon realized that only large companies would bid on them. With little competition, the bids were coming in at \$400-\$600 per tree! They then decided to bid out the removals in lots of only 100 trees, a strategy that allowed smaller, local companies to bid and competition to increase. Their removal costs were lowered to \$125 per tree.

- Remove infested ash while they are still green. Tree removal costs more when they are completely dead because of associated cleanup costs. Plus, dead trees are harder on equipment.
- Remove trees as soon as possible to try to stay ahead of the curve. The situation can quickly become overwhelming.
- When contracting out ash removals, bidding out the trees in smaller lot sizes allows more local companies to bid, thus increasing competition.
- The location of your wood waste yard and transportation needs are best addressed before EAB is detected.

Currently, no Wisconsin municipalities are known to be preemptively removing healthy ash trees. However, some communities are accelerating the removal of hazardous, defective, declining and poorly placed ash.

Prepare for obstacles when purchasing large removal equipment. The city of Madison Forestry Section’s experience in the recent past in replacing some of their bucket trucks is a lesson learned. Once they decided on the type of bucket truck needed, the city found it would take up to **one full year** before the new bucket truck would be delivered. New bucket trucks are only manufactured when a customer orders one. First, the truck chassis needs to be manufactured by the auto manufacturer (i.e., Ford, GM, etc.). Then the truck chassis is sent to the tower manufacturer to be fitted with the tower portion (booms) of the bucket truck. If you will be in need of

large removal equipment, it is best to put your order in sooner rather than later because of the amount of time it takes to manufacture it. If you are considering purchasing used bucket trucks, you will find that ones that will pass safety inspections are hard to come by and go fast.

Mutual use agreements are a great way to consolidate resources related to removal equipment. The Village of Howard and the Village of Ashwaubenon had one such agreement. They began by sharing staff (a village forester). After each decided they needed their own full-time forester, the communities wrote up a mutual use agreement to share removal and pruning equipment.

For a resource to help your community and residents prepare for ash removal, visit the Emerald Ash Borer Toolkit link at <http://dnr.wi.gov/forestry/uf/eab/> (Chapter 8 – Removals & Utilization).

For a more detailed version of this story as well as other communities’ removal stories, visit *Lessons Shared – Journal Entries 3, 4, 6, 10 & 11*.

Please share what your community is doing to prepare for EAB with others.

Send ideas to Olivia Witthun, Urban Forestry Assistant, olivia.witthun@wisconsin.gov.

The fourth entry of EAB Stories and Lessons Learned was compiled by Northeast Region Urban Forestry Assistant Olivia Witthun and South Central Region Urban Forestry Assistant Kathy Gonzalez.