



Safety is No Accident

A good friend once said to me, “A good arborist is a lazy one.” I was a little insulted until he explained, “He should always be looking for an easier and better way to get a job done.”

The theme of this message is safety. I’d like to believe that most of us comply with safety standards. As professionals, we consider ourselves well informed, trained, and equipped to safely perform our work. We attend workshops and seminars, read trade publications, and invest in new tools and equipment intended on helping us work safely and efficiently.

How many times have you been part of a conversation where someone had a close call, or even worse, an injury, and you hear, “That was a dumb idea,” or “I won’t do that again?” My question has always been, “Why did you do that in the first place?” With some humiliation, I must admit to recently cutting (wounding) my finger. As with many accidents, my injury was the result of improper use of a tool. This action forced me to rethink many of my habits, and ask why I chose to let my guard down, and better yet, how I could reinforce the importance of safety to our membership.

In 2006, the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) published major revisions to the Safety Requirements for Arboricultural Operations (ANSI Z133.1-2006). While considering this message, I reviewed the standards, and was reminded of the

thoughtful effort it must have taken by many committed individuals representing our profession.

Arborists are recognized by ANSI as those engaged in the practice of arboriculture. To confirm, the definition of arboriculture is “the art, science, technology and business of utility, commercial and municipal tree care.” As I read those words, they reaffirm that the bar has been raised for us, and that we must aspire to conduct ourselves accordingly.

ANSI standards should not be confused or thought of as recommendations or guidelines, but as the **requirements** of our profession. We work in one of the most dangerous industries in North America. Sometimes we need to remind ourselves that, even though technology, along with ingenuity, has provided us a number of devices to make our jobs easier and safer, we still must be fully engaged as we carry out our day-to-day work to remain productive and safe.

I’m reminded of another quote: “There’s one tool in the shed that can always use some extra polishing—your brain!” Remember, safety is no accident!

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