



FEATURE 7, SEPTEMBER 2006

AA Utility Arboriculture Group Quarterly Update

Expanded Core Group

As advertised in AA Newsletter 133 (June 2006) four more seats on the UAG Core Group have been created to add to the breadth and depth of interests represented. If you want to be considered for the Core Group please examine the Group's Terms of Reference (www.trees.org.uk type key word 'Utility') and submit a brief CV to the Group's secretary Halley McCallum halm@btsgroupuk.com. The process of election to the Core Group (which is a sub group of the AA's Professional Committee) is documented in the Terms of Reference. The Group has also issued a questionnaire to its Virtual Group members asking for views on priorities for action

Re-certification and Revision of NPTC Utility Arboriculture Units

The Core Group has met with NPTC to discuss its concerns regarding both re-certification and revision recognising that these two long standing issues concern all in the industry

NPTC has proposed a redevelopment timetable and it is hoped that this will be launched at the AA's National Arboriculture Conference in York at the beginning of October.

Lantra Awards has confirmed that it will launch its new suite of five Utility Arboriculture training courses at the Conference.

Safety Reporting

Soon to be added to the AA website will be a safety reporting proforma – your opportunity to report incidents that could have been accidents, or were accidents, from which others can learn. All will be able to be done anonymously.

The Application of the Work at Height Regulations to Utility Arboriculture.

By Pete Jackson

The arboriculture industry as a whole is coming to terms with the introduction of the Work at Height Regulations 2005 (WAHR). A major focus is the requirement for a risk assessment driven analysis of

available techniques for accessing aerial work sites. It should be assumed that the HSE would require this analysis to be formal.

As with most risk assessed processes arborists are asked to consider a range of controls and apply the most “reasonably practicable” methodology for safe working in the particular situation in which they find themselves. This means, in practice, the consideration of the following hierarchy:

- Avoid work at height if possible
- Temporary working platform such as a MEWP, scaffolding etc.
- Work positioning (rope and harness)

The consideration of safest method should take into account all relevant site specific risks.

Within the amenity and domestic arboriculture sectors the presence of an overhead power line would be dealt with prior to aerial access methods being selected as part of a GS6 assessment. [GS6 – Avoidance of Danger from Overhead Power Lines is available from HSE Books priced £5.00].

However within electrical utility arboriculture the energised power line is omnipresent and utility arborists are forced to consider the risks associated with them as part of their WAHR assessment. This means factoring in a whole raft of extra considerations, such as

- Line Voltage
- Line construction.
- The Distribution Safety Rules
- Distribution Network Operators' (DNOs') local safety rules.
- The insulating status of proposed access plant and equipment.
- Authorisation level of operatives.

It would not be acceptable to select scaffolding as method for accessing trees within the vicinity zone of a 132Kv overhead line! To add complication it is not possible to adopt a common approach across the UK as all DNOs employ significantly different local safety rules. Also as the distinction between arborist and linesman becomes blurred the assessment of acceptable access methods becomes more difficult.

The AA Utility Arboriculture Group is looking at these issues, indeed they were a catalyst to the formation of the UAG. In the meantime it is important that utility arboriculture companies must have a method of assessing their preferred tree access methods in the vicinity of overhead power lines taking into account these factors.

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