



UTILITY ARBORIST PROGRAM

What is a Utility Arborist?

Not everyone is familiar with what a Utility Arborist (a.k.a. tree trimmer) is or what they do. A Utility Arborist is someone who uses highly technical skills to prune, clear vegetation or remove trees while respecting the “limits of approach” of energized electrical infrastructure and power lines. The two main aspects of this occupation are routine vegetation maintenance and storm response and clean up. This involves working at both the ground level and at very high heights. According to the national occupational standard, a Utility Arborist needs to be able to implement safe working practices, coordinate work activity, climb trees, rig to control trees, prune vegetation with appropriate techniques, fell trees, and participate in professional development activities (EHRC, 2013).

Why manage vegetation next to power lines?

Vegetation management programs are essential to maintaining the integrity of the electrical system. Trees are one of the main causes of unplanned disruptions in electrical services and can

cause electrical faults. Trees can limit or prohibit access to electrical infrastructure, and can pose a significant safety hazard if touching an energized power line. The International Society of Arboriculture (ISA 2002) states that vegetation management is important because it is “*fundamentally different from managing any other component of the transmission and distribution system. All the engineering or hardware components of the system are static; while in place they do not grow, change size, or change shape. Trees, on the other hand, are dynamic; they grow and change over time. Additionally, the growth rate, form, and habit for every individual tree species are different, and every individual tree is constantly changing.*”

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The Utility Arborist Program is a new two-year college diploma program that will commence in February 2017 at the Maritime College of Forest Technology [MCFT] in Fredericton. Vegetation management efforts along power distribution and transmission right-of-ways have been increasing over the past few years throughout the Province, and there currently is a high demand for workers in this occupation. This diploma will provide students with the opportunity to learn from experts at MCFT, from NB Power, and from Arboriculture Canada Training and Education Ltd. Amongst several other certifications, students will be receiving their Pesticide Applicator Certificate. Utility Arborist is an occupation that

currently is being reviewed for trade designation by the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour, and we are working with the provinces of Ontario and British Columbia to move toward “Red Seal” designation.

For more information, please visit utilityarborist.ca or email uap@mcft.ca.

References

International Society of Arboriculture (ISA). (2002). *Utility Specialist Certification Study Guide*. Champaign, IL: International Society of Arboriculture.

Electrical Safety Authority (n.d.). *Tree Trimming Around Powerlines*. (n.p.).

Electricity Human Resources Canada (EHRC). 2013. *National Occupational Standard: Utility Arborist*. (n.p.): Electricity Human Resources Canada.