



INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF ARBORICULTURE ONTARIO (ISAO)
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The Ontario Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA Ontario) is a non-profit organization representing over 1,100 arborists and tree care companies in Ontario, Canada. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have experienced numerous federal, provincial, and local health or business closures affecting our members. While the jurisdictions, business activities affected, and length of time for the closure may differ, most will exempt essential businesses or essential business activities that directly relate to public safety.

ISA Ontario is urging local, provincial, and federal policymakers to consider arborists, tree care workers and tree care companies among those operations deemed to be “essential” businesses that can exercise the option to remain open to support their communities during these difficult times. While not every type of tree care work performed fits into this category, there are specific aspects of the industry that meet this definition.

To assist members in determining which aspects of their businesses may be considered "essential" under certain federal, provincial, or local health or business closure orders, **ISA Ontario** recommends that each company review its existing scheduled and planned work backlogs to identify the specific work activities directly related to client or public safety. These would be deemed an essential business activity. All other non-safety related work would be deemed non-essential and can be completed once the pandemic has subsided.

ISA Ontario has distilled essential tree care services into the following three categories:

The protection of infrastructure

Our members work daily to make sure the infrastructure that keeps our country running is clear of hazards. The vegetation around utility and transmission lines, telecommunications equipment, roads and bridges, and other infrastructure needs to be maintained to ensure there are no interruptions of service or other issues. These operations are essential and need to continue even in times of emergency.

Maintaining the public safety of our communities

By removing hazards, such as trees that may fall on houses, businesses, or infrastructure, tree care companies play a vital role in keeping our communities safe. Our members work every day across Ontario to mitigate the risk of trees damaging buildings and harming individuals. If this work stops, the potential for damage grows that may otherwise be avoided.

Protection against the spread of invasive and/or injurious pests

The threat of invasive and injurious pests cannot be understated. These include the emerald ash borer, gypsy moths, and numerous others. Spring is the time our members need to be out in the field treating for invasive pests, or the public health will be adversely impacted. These pests also have the potential to cost our country billions of dollars in damage, so our members being in the field and mitigating these risks is crucial, even in times of emergency.

Essential Business Activities

When making the determination of whether a certain aspect of tree care is an "essential business" activity or not, ISA Ontario offers the partial list below used in hundreds of jurisdictions throughout the country during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis.

- Imminent hazard tree removal or removal of a dangerous tree;
- Pruning of dead, dying, or dangerous limbs;
- Support services to essential services as required;
- Treatment for invasive insects which if left untreated would rapidly destroy a tree causing a hazard;
- Utility line clearance;
- Road safety clearance;
- Cabling or bracing a hazardous tree;
- Mitigating storm damage;
- Emergency response readiness;
- Treatment for ticks and mosquitos or other public health treatments;
- Removal of fire damaged or fuel trees in a fire hazard area;
- Assessment of hazard trees or pest issues for the purposes of removal or treatment as described above.

Non-Essential Business Activities

- Shrub trimming or pruning;
- Routine tree pruning;
- Routine tree removal when no abnormal safety issues exist;
- Vista pruning;
- Tree or shrub planting;
- Installation of irrigation;
- Fertilization;

- Pest management that does not involve invasive pests, borers, or disease that can rapidly destroy trees.

In times of emergency each company must make the decision whether to continue with operations as normal. These are unusual times, and each jurisdiction may have drastically different rules and regulations regarding business operations. **ISA Ontario** is committed to monitoring the local, provincial, and federal policies regarding essential versus nonessential businesses in terms of business closures during lockdowns, and we will update members with any information that may impact their businesses.

ISA Ontario is here for its members, and we will continue to be a resource for arborists and tree care companies during these unusual times. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me directly with any questions on this developing situation.

Regards,



Ken Gillies
President
ISA Ontario



Rebecca Lord
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