



To Whom It May Concern:

The Tree Care Industry Association (TCIA) is a trade association of 2,300 tree care firms, with the mission of advancing tree care businesses. The International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) is a professional society representing over 24,000 members and has conferred over 47,000 credentials to arborists around the globe. TCIA and ISA have members in all 50 states and represent the interests of the entire tree care industry. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic response, we have experienced numerous federal, state, and local health or business closure orders throughout the United States that may affect our members. You may have heard of these referred to as “shelter in place” orders. 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 relate to the safety of the public.

TCIA and ISA deem certain aspects of tree care to meet the definition of “essential business” given the fact that the performance of several highly skilled services directly protects the safety of the public and the safe operation of buildings and residences. While not every type of tree care work performed on every property could fit into this category, clearly 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, state, or local health or business closure orders, TCIA and ISA recommend that each company reviews its existing scheduled and planned work backlogs, and identifies the specific work activities that are directly related to client or public safety. Then separate the safety related work orders from the remainder of the work orders or work. These work orders or this work should be deemed an essential business activity. Any work that is not safety-related should be deemed non-essential and can wait until the pandemic response has subsided.



TCIA and ISA have distilled essential tree care services into the following three categories:

The protection of infrastructure

Our members work every day 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 the nation 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 spotted lantern fly, emerald ash borer, 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. Our members often treat for ticks as well, and if left unabated, the spread of Lyme Disease could pose a danger to communities across the country.



When making the determination of whether a certain aspect of tree care is an “essential business” activity or not, TCIA and ISA offer the following partial lists that have been used in hundreds of jurisdictions throughout the country during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis.

Members throughout both associations have shared the following lists of work items that they identified as essential activities:

- Hazard tree removal or removal of a dangerous tree
- Pruning of dead, dying, or dangerous limbs
- 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

Members throughout both associations have shared the following list of work that they have identified as 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 the operation of business. TCIA and ISA are committed to monitoring the updates of COVID-19 policies effecting our members. We will be closely monitoring the constantly evolving local, state, and federal policy 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.

TCIA and ISA are here for our members, and we will continue to be a resource for tree care companies in these unusual times. Please do not hesitate to reach out to TCIA or ISA directly with any questions on this developing situation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'David White'.

David White, CAE
President & CEO
Tree Care Industry Association

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Caitlyn Pollihan'.

Caitlyn Pollihan, CAE
Executive Director
International Society of Arboriculture