

Safety and summer's long hours

By Steve Marshall

Phones ring incessantly. Your email pings like a pinball machine, the office is buzzing and in the field your firm is onboarding new crew members. It's summertime, and there aren't enough hours in the day to handle all the work that's knocking on your door.

With all the demands, it's times like these when safety may slip from top-of-mind to the bottom of the to-do list. Yet the busy season is when safety should be the highest priority. Crews are working longer days, tackling a longer list of jobs. They can get tired. Some of them are new, and they may not be thinking about safety when in fact it's never been more important for all of them.



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At Davey, our utility crews are working hard to keep up with all the foliage sprouting around power lines while battling the summer heat. It's a tall order to keep up with work while making safety a top priority, but they're doing it. And it's key that managers both in the field and in the office give them the right tools to maintain a safe working environment during the summer months.

Some of the ways we stay flexible to maintain employee safety include, when possible, shortening the work week to four, 10-hour days. This gives them three days to rest. The difficulty here lies in the sheer volume of work to be done, and workload can sometimes dictate a 50-hour or more work week. The periodic necessity of a long work week makes

it even more imperative that we pay attention to employees' physical condition.

Perhaps most importantly, we educate our employees on arguably summer's biggest safety issue: heat illness. Education starts with our foremen, who begin each morning's daily job briefing by talking with their crews about safe productivity at the work site.

Preventing heat stress is a common topic at job briefings, which we hold at each site before any job starts. We educate our employees on the signs of heat illness, so they know if they're starting to experience heat stress. They also learn what to look for in a colleague who may start to suffer heat stress, so they can watch out for each other.

Foremen schedule frequent rest periods with water breaks in shaded areas. And Davey provides water containers for employees to fill with clean, potable water at the start of each day and throughout the work day. Our crew leaders also work to schedule the most physically demanding aspects of a job during cooler times of day.

Regardless of where we are working, throughout the Davey Company, we must make ourselves aware of the natural work environment, our health status and our personal "physical preventative maintenance" to reduce the risk of heat illness and other summer safety concerns.

This time of year, safe work practices are paramount to ensuring crew members can get the job done safely when the work environment demands longer days. Even though demands are high, make sure you take the time to make safety a top priority this busy season.

Steve Marshall is vice president of operations with Davey Tree and a member of TCIA's Board of Directors.

Peer group offers help to business leaders

"It's great to be in a group of like-minded people who really understand my problems," says David Scharfenberger of Wachtel Tree Science. "I knew the benefit of getting together with such a group of business owners would be good, but it's even better than I had hoped. It's now like I have my own private advisory board that counsels me and helps me achieve my goals."

Did you know that TCIA has the only peer-to-peer group dedicated to the tree care industry?

The group is a facilitated, self-governing, strategic gathering of company leaders who meet regularly to develop strategies, solutions and best practices for personal, professional or business development.

The group most recently met in May and is scheduled to meet again at TCI EXPO 2014 in Hartford, Connecticut, this fall. Typically the meetings cover personal development, company development (such as business growth, profitability benchmarks, exit strategies), HR issues (such as employee development, succession planning, employee motivational strategies), and other topics as the group members determine.

"There is no other group or location to gain this type of experience, insight and accountability than the TCIA peer group," says Ron Rubin of Thrive, Inc. "The fellowship and camaraderie the group is developing cannot be emphasized enough. Over time the group members become familiar with you and your business, so they can really provide insights."

If you are interested in learning more about how joining TCIA's Peer-to-Peer Networking Group can help you and your company, contact TCIA at 1-800-733-2622 and ask for Susan Scacchi.

Calendar of Events

July 31-August 1, 2014
Certified Treecare Safety Prof/CTSP Workshop
Milwaukee, WI

August 13-14, 2014
Certified Treecare Safety Prof/CTSP Workshop
Hayward, CA

August 26-27, 2014
Certified Treecare Safety Prof/CTSP Workshop
Orlando, FL

November 13-15, 2014
TCI EXPO 2014
Hartford, CT

For details on these and more training events, click on the Training tab at www.tcia.org

For a schedule of CTSP workshops, see pg. 10, or click the Training tab at www.tcia.org

For other event details, call 1-800-733-2622 or visit www.tcia.org and click on Events



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