



THE CITY OF FAYETTEVILLE, ARKANSAS

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## HIRING PROFESSIONAL HELP FOR YOUR TREES

The City of Fayetteville assists its residents with providing for the testing, certification and insurance check of tree services that work in the city. Chapter 167 **Tree Preservation and Protection**, Section 07 **Commercial Tree Pruner/Service Certification and Insurance** requires any commercial person or company for hire that does tree work to be certified by the City and carry a minimum amount of liability insurance. To become certified the owner/manager and supervisors of a company have to take a 30 question exam on tree care and pass with a minimum 75% correct. The owner/manager then must provide a copy of their liability insurance.

A list of Certified Tree Pruners/Services is available on the City web site under the *Tree Pruner & Tree Service Certification* page. This certification attests to the fact that the person working on trees or supervising a crew has a basic knowledge of tree care and that the company has minimum liability insurance. This gives residents at least some information to begin the process of selecting a contractor to work on their trees.

Weather events can cause major damage to limbs or entire trees. Falling branches can result in damage to your property or your neighbors. But how do you know if your tree needs to be removed or pruned? How do you know if the person or company you're hiring to do tree work for you is properly qualified and insured? How do you know you need to do something to your trees right now or can it wait? You may be asking, Where can I get help?

If you have larger trees with moderate to significant damage the one question "Where do I get help?" may be the most important. Unless you have some experience working in trees no one needs to be using spikes, ladders or ropes to climb into a tree. Combine the risk of falling with the fact chainsaws are one of the most dangerous tools and the situation is ripe for injury or death. Tree work is one of the top five most dangerous jobs in the U.S., well trained professionals make mistakes and lose their life. The Occupational Safety and Health Association has a new set of safety requirements for professional tree services. Be kind to your trees and yourself, hire a qualified professional to assess your trees and if needed prune or remove them.

Finding a qualified tree service is important protection for the homeowner and business owner. Sometimes less credible tree companies follow storms for a quick buck and blow out of town as fast as the storm. Knowing how to hire a reputable arborist can help prevent becoming a victim all over again. So, who is a qualified professional and how can I tell? The tree care profession has come a long way in the last 30 plus years both with scientific research on tree care and in the professionalizing of the industry. Two organizations, the International Society of Arboriculture

(ISA) and the American Society of Consulting Arborists (ASCA) certify members in their competency pertaining to urban forestry work. Certified professionals, called Certified Arborists by the ISA and Consulting Arborists by the ASCA have passed specialized exams and are the most qualified professionals to assess your trees. Through their training and experience these professions should be able to assess your trees for restoration pruning or removal. In addition to Certified Arborist the ISA also certifies tree workers/climbers. These professions are qualified in safety and rigging as well as performing tree pruning and/or removal.

What should you look for in getting professional help for your trees?

If a person with a pick up truck, a ladder and a chainsaw shows up chances are they are not knowledgeable in tree care or safety, additionally they probably lack the correct insurance or any insurance to be doing tree work.

Certified and Consulting Arborist should be carrying a card with an expiration date. Ask to see it or check the organizations web site.

A listing in a telephone book does not mean they are a reputable business nor certified to work in the City. Check the City's list for certification and check with the better business bureau (in the City the company's headquarters is).

If someone says they are working for a company but their truck has no markings call the company and inquire if this is their employee. Some people are impersonating employees for reputable companies or an employee is moonlight and would not be covered by the companies insurance. Additionally, a commercial tree company may be doing sub-contracting work for a City certified business. That sub-contractor needs to get certified as well.

Landscape companies are usually not trained or insured for tree work. Use a company specializing in tree trimming with insurance for trimming trees.

Ask for current certificates of insurance showing that they are fully insured for property damage, personal liability, and worker compensation. The insurance needs to be for tree work not landscaping, constructions etc. Ask if the employees are leased, if so make sure the leasing company has the correct workers compensation on them.

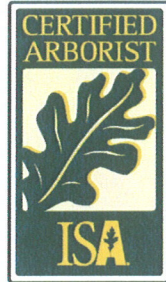
If you hire an uninsured tree expert, you can be held liable for any damages or injuries that occur while they are on the job. If you hire a company that is from another state, verify that his insurance covers him/her for work done in your state.

When examining the estimate, you should look at all specifications and credentials, and the work to be done to determine which company will provide the best service with the skill and professionalism needed to protect your investment. And most importantly get it in writing.

Generally speaking, good tree work by qualified professionals is worth the additional expense; however, poor work, no matter the price paid, can cost you a great deal in the long run.

Professional prices should include liability and workman's compensation insurance, and may also include the use of bucket trucks and equipment. If you feel an estimate is high, do not hesitate to ask what the price includes, you may realize you are getting much more bang for your buck than what a less expensive tree service is offering.

Take the time to be an informed consumer and prevent yourself from becoming victimized.



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