

What was the problem/situation?

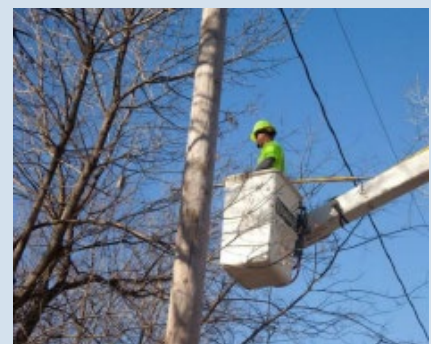
Workers in the tree-care industry face hazards from many sources beyond simply the tree they are working on, and these potential hazards are becoming increasingly common with climate change. According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, workers who are exposed to extreme heat, prolonged work in hot environments or engaged in strenuous physical activity may be at risk for heat stress. Heat stress can lead to heat stroke, heat exhaustion, rhabdomyolysis (muscle tissue breakdown), and death. In addition, extreme weather events or natural disasters such as floods, storms, lightning, droughts, and wildfires are associated with injuries, diseases, and mental stress. Tree-care workers involved in rescue, cleanup and restoration are exposed to hazardous conditions both during and after extreme weather events.



Another hazard that tree-care workers need to recognize is insect-borne disease. With a sharp rise in cases of Lyme and other tickborne diseases in NJ over the past several years, tree-care workers should be vigilant about protecting themselves. Other stinging and biting insects such as mosquitoes can also spread disease.

How was NJ Environmental Public Health Tracking involved?

An Environmental Public Health Tracking (EPHT) staff member participates on the NJ Committee for the Advancement of Arboriculture, a nonprofit organization whose goal is to train and protect tree-care workers. EPHT staff and partners developed a half-day training course entitled, "Environmental Hazards Awareness for Tree Workers." EPHT staff provided a one-hour, in-person training seminar during the course, which was held in July 2023.



The half-day course was designed to address multiple environmental hazards associated with outdoor work in a changing climate. It included three sections:

- Vector-borne disease (presented by NJDOH Communicable Disease Service staff);
- Heat- and cold-related illness prevention and post-storm hazards (presented by EPHT staff); and
- Skin protection, including from UV light, poisonous plants, and insects (presented by NJ Department of Environmental Protection staff).

What specific outcomes resulted from this training?

Tree-care workers gained enhanced knowledge and understanding of environmental hazards in their occupation. Twenty-nine tree-care workers attended the course, and each received three Continuing Education Units (CEUs). NJ tree-care workers are required to be state certified and annually obtain CEU credits. The content of this course was approved by the NJ Board of Tree Experts.

Positive feedback was verbally received from course participants and they stated that they will use knowledge gained to reduce risks and protect themselves and/or their employees.



Related online NJDOH resources

- Tree Work is Dangerous -- Don't Get Hurt, Get Trained! [English](#); [Español](#)
- Hazard Alert - Wood Chippers [English](#); [Español](#)
- [Post-Storm Tree Hazards: Resources for Homeowners and Workers/Employers](#)