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## A NEW YORK CITY SAFETY PROGRAM

by Charles E. Speiser, Safety Director

Municipal tree workers performing their skills in a hostile environment face the plight that most people know . . . Forestry is a dangerous job.

In an effort to balance the scales to offset the relentless pile of horrendous accident statistics (injury frequency rates for Parks & Recreation employees published by the National Safety Council were 35.51 in 1973), the Department of Labor in 1971 designated five industries with the highest injury rates as target industries. Logging was among the five. Many of the same type hazards are confronting municipal tree workers as in the Logging Industry, i.e. bucking, falling, power saw injuries, etc.

After the near fatality of a Park treeworker two years ago, the New York City Department of Parks, Climber & Pruner Local 1506, AFSCME, AFL-CIO Safety Committee embarked in an "all out" safety program. The committee's goals were to reduce or eliminate the dangers they know about, i.e. powerlines, noise, and vibration, and to learn about others they did not know of, seeking to eliminate those too.

Eager for education, they took advantage of the New York City Employee Safety Program which taught them to be skilled instructors as alluded in the June 1975 Safety Newsletter ar-

ticle *Training the Trainer—An Approach to Safety Training*. Furthermore, the group attended numerous occupational safety and health courses and conferences sponsored by the Union and Universities. At the seminars it was shocking to learn some of the chemicals that the spray applicators were using can have adverse health affects causing cancer or destroying the nervous system.

Conmingled with these problems, the Forestry Division had antiquated tools and vehicles, no protective equipment, lack of training and poor morale.

With the perserverance of the Safety Committee and the cooperation of Park Management, we provided the following:

### *Training*

Spray applicators participated with foreman; representatives from management, chemical companies, and the Union; and medical scientists by attending an in-house four day chemical seminar.

In-house forestry instructors developed and prepared lesson plans and taught courses in work-area protection, improving climbing techniques and safety skills, New York State Industrial Rule Code 3 (working in and about power

lines), specialized equipment, aerial lifts, stump cutter, power saws and personal protective equipment.

Approximately 200 employees including supervisors received an American Red Cross Standard First Aid card.

#### *Equipment*

Labor/Management Safety Committee members were released from the job to view, and obtain prices for, desired equipment. After demonstrations, the mutually agreed upon equipment was purchased by the Agency. Forestry personnel now have (1) hard hats meeting requirements specified by ANSI Standard 289.2 affixed with ear protection muffs, not voiding dielectric properties, (2) face shields and goggles meeting requirements specified by ANSI Standard 287.1, (3) respirators approved by the U.S. Bureau of Mines, (4) fire extinguishers and first aid kits for all vehicles, (5) heavy duty work gloves, (6) climbing lines constructed of polyester with a nylon core, (7) climbing saddles which are adjustable to prevent slipping, and (8) protective chemical suits, head to toe, light, plasticized with gloves

and boots that are disposed of after contamination.

All aerial lifts were returned to the manufacturer for complete overhaul.

#### *Physical Examinations*

A program for blood monitoring was begun for all who do spraying with the New York City Health Departments. Weekly reports are made on chemicals each man is exposed to, and frequent blood samples taken during the spray season. Any employee whose "cholinesterase" level approaches the danger point will be reassigned.

These achievements derived in a period when our city is bestowed with a multitude of problems exemplifies that a concerted effort by Union and Management can be prolific. This effort can substantiate that through education and concern, we can bring forth change.

#### *District Council 37*

*American Federation of State  
County and Municipal Employees  
New York, New York*

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## ABSTRACT

Anonymous. 1978. **Forest City Tree: tree protection contract application.** *Weeds, Trees and Turf* 17(3): 59, 63, 66.

William P. Lanphear has been an arborist since he graduated from college in 1937. His company, Forest City Tree Protection Co., is located in Mayfield, Ohio, a Cleveland suburb. Forest City Tree Protection Co. has five sprayers in operation. We do other spraying than elm tree spraying. We do a dormant oil spray, which is mostly hydraulic. Then we go into foliage sprays for various problems. We also spray evergreens. We spray specialized things like hollies and magnolias, and crab apple trees for fungus. For the elm tree spray we use an emulsifiable concentrate of methoxychlor. In the dormant oil we use the highly refined superior oil. An estimate of the total cost of our chemical use is hard to say. In checking our inventory, I found about \$20,000 worth of chemicals. Tree spraying is a highly trained field, and you have to be very careful in the materials you use. You have to be up to date and study the problems more than you used to, because you can't just go out and spray trees. You have to use approved chemicals. You have to know what to use. You have to abide by the labels. I am not an advocate of spraying everything that has a disease. A lot of times proper horticultural methods will solve the problem without spraying. We find we are still quite busy with spraying.