Communication is the Key

Tree Line USA and its partnership with the utility industry have made great strides in safeguarding community trees. A key to this progress has been communication — both between utilities and their customers and within the industry itself. The Utility Arborist Association (UAA), a member group in the International Society of Arboriculture, has been an important impetus for better communication. Another has been the annual Partners in Community Forestry National Conference sponsored by the Arbor Day Foundation. This popular event brings together the nation’s leading tree care and utility experts, practitioners in arboriculture and urban forestry, and interested citizens. It focuses on issues and successful techniques and equipment, but more importantly, it provides a forum for the exchange of ideas and support. It is also the venue where Tree Line USA utilities are publicly recognized for their achievements.

For the date and location of the next conference and more information, please visit arborday.org/PCF.

THE BENEFITS OF BEING A TREE LINE USA UTILITY

- Healthier and more abundant community forests, including less tree mortality when proper pruning and trenching/tunneling practices are used.
- Increased service reliability because properly pruned trees with healthy root systems will mean less decay and structural weakness and fewer downed lines during storms.
- Lower line clearance costs resulting from proper pruning instead of topping and from more low-maturing trees being planted beneath lines.
- Fewer customer complaints.
- Better public relations resulting from publicity surrounding the award and its requirements.
- Lower peak air conditioning and heating demand because more trees — and better placement of trees — will help moderate air temperatures.
- More trees will absorb carbon dioxide produced by power plants that burn fossil fuels.
- Satisfaction that comes from doing one’s best to improve our communities and the environment.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ...

For more information about Tree Line USA or other programs and helpful resources of the Arbor Day Foundation, please visit arborday.org.

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Trees in the forest face severe competition to survive, but it is nothing compared with what their city cousins must endure to share space with utilities. In the confined areas along streets and near buildings, limbs and wires compete in the air while roots, cables, and pipes vie for space in the soil below. The dilemma is that both trees and utilities are essential to the high standard of living we expect in our communities. The benefits of trees range from energy-saving shade to pure beauty that brightens our lives and adds value to our property. At the same time, our way of life depends heavily on the delivery of electricity, gas, telephone service, and cable TV — and we want it without interruption.

Utility company employees strive to meet the demands for good service. To do this, they find it necessary to keep overhead lines free from contact with limbs and out of danger from branches that fall during storms. As the companies respond to demands for buried utilities, they face yet another set of challenges in placing or repairing lines in the same soil where roots grow.

In some communities, the tree-utility dilemma has led to the deformation of trees by topping, mortality from severed roots, and the removal of large trees. In other areas, more enlightened companies have developed methods that allow trees and utilities to co-exist — all to the benefit of a better community. In 1992, the Arbor Day Foundation created Tree Line USA to publicly recognize those companies or municipali-

ITIES that provide utility service while at the same time protecting community trees. Just as importantly, the intent is to inform others about this better way of providing total service to their communities and to encourage them to do likewise.

Better trees and utility lines can co-exist through careful pruning of large trees, planting trees in the future that mature below overhanging lines, and tunneling instead of trenching near tree roots.