

Open Government Status:

FULLY OPEN

HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMISSION

ARBORICULTURE AND FORESTRY ADVISORY GROUP

Engaging Arboricultural Clients Safety and Health Awareness Days

1 Issue

1.1 The continued use of Engaging Arboricultural Clients Safety and Health Awareness Days (SHADs). These are aimed specifically at clients, in particular Local Authorities (LAs), who are responsible for employing arboriculture contractors, and are run jointly by HSE, the Arboricultural Association and Treevolution (an arboriculture training provider).

2 Recommendation

2.1 That members note the current position outlined in this paper, with a further 4 being run in 2006/07 and the proposal that these SHADs should continue into 2007/08.

3 Background

3.1 For the last 3 years HSE in conjunction with the Arboricultural Association and Treevolution has been running a series of SHADs aimed specifically at clients who are responsible for employing arboriculture contractors. These SHADs are free to attendees, funded by HSE's Agriculture & Food Sector Communications budget. Their aim is to improve attendees:

- understanding of the legal framework within which arboricultural contractors work;
- recognition of industry best practice;
- understanding of the principles of risk assessment systems employed in arboriculture; and
- selection of appropriate contractors and their ability to monitor and review them.

3.2 Clients were originally selected as a discrete audience because they are in an ideal position to improve standards of contractor performance by setting standards and monitoring the quality of the work carried out. However as discussed at the recent AFAG Training and Certification Project Group meeting although there is an increasing awareness of standards amongst major building companies, most LAs are notoriously poor at checking and ensuring the competence of their contractors and are still primarily influenced by cost. Whilst BALI have found that LAs are increasingly referring to their ROLO (Register of Landscape Operatives) scheme for landscape contractors and the AA have similar experience with their Approved Contractors Scheme, a lot more still needs to be done to encourage LAs to employ (and recommend) contractors who can demonstrate that they employ competent operators.

3.3 LAs are under increasing pressure to deliver services at least cost, with less staff. Consequently, expertise in many LAs is now minimal or non-existent, particularly at managerial level and LA tree care is often being contracted out to service companies. LAs also maintain lists of contractors and are vital to improving awareness of the public (householders and businesses) about the value of using competent (approved) contractors.

3.4 The continuing poor control of LAs over their contractors highlights the need for further client SHADs and/or some other means of promulgating the important health and safety issues which need to be addressed.

3.5 In the main SHAD attendees have come from Local Authorities but other key organisations are invited and have attended including:

Housing Associations
Construction Companies
NHS Trusts
Network Rail
Landscapers
Highways Agency
Utility Companies
Universities and Colleges of FE
The National Trust
The Forestry Commission
Land Agents

3.6 A total of 8 SHADs have been held since October 2003, attracting on average 60 participants to each event. Two have been held so far in 2005/06, with 2 more planned for March 2006 and another scheduled for May 2006. SHADs have been spread around the country, so far taking place in Durham, Surrey, Sheffield, Yorkshire, Gwynedd, Lancashire, Derbyshire and Stirling. The next 3 are to take place in Manchester, North Wales and Bedfordshire.

3.7 These events are currently costing in the region of £5000 each. An evaluation exercise has been carried out after each SAD, with the majority of respondents reporting that they found them very useful and were likely to take some action as a result of the information and training they had received. The course content has been amended in response to comments received and the current programme is attached at Appendix 1. Comments from the 2 most recent SHADs included:

- HSE should make these sort of events a regular and significant part of its work plan. It is after all an advisory as well as an enforcement body.
- I thought it was a very good course that opened my eyes to the dos and don'ts.
- The seminar/course is the first I have attended for a long time. I am pleased I made the effort. The course was well organized, comprehensive and invaluable.
- Well run, interesting course.
- Very informative and well run. Session was informal and very productive.
- A very worthwhile, well organised and enjoyable session.
- Very useful.
- This was a very informative seminar covering not only the legislation but also the practical aspects of the work activity.
- More participation needed to wake people up and get them engaging.

- The emphasis was on H and S and tree climbing. It would be equally interesting to expand into the preliminaries involved when engaging contractors as would be stated in a contract document.

3.8 A number of other approaches have been tried over the last 3-4 years including events organised by the AA alone. However, the events were poorly attended (typically less than 10 people), probably because they had to charge a fee. The current format of the Arb SHADs seems to be the best way of attracting large numbers of clients. The events are however limited in their impact due the small numbers that have been held each year (between 3 and 4) and the fact that they are spread across the UK.

4 Discussion

4.1 The following key points have been identified:

- The programme of SHADs specifically orientated at ‘clients’ has proved to be very successful and popular with its target audience and there are strong indications that they should continue, as a cost-effective method of intervention.
- It is suggested that the target audience could usefully be expanded, eg to actively engage building contractors and other key influencers.
- Discussions with the insurance industry have indicated that presenting brokers and underwriters with the practical realities of what is involved and highlighting current standards of training and good practice would be particularly effective, as they have the potential to be major influencers in promoting training and improving competence in the industry, and thereby reduce the potential for injury and ill health, as well as damage to property, etc.
- To date, however, there has been no specific evaluation of the long term impact of Arb Client SHADs. 

5 Action

5.1 AFAG members to invited to consider the contents of this paper and agree on the best way forward for continuing to influence clients who employ arboricultural contractors. Should HSE be continuing to fund the programme of SHADs in their present format as the main means of influencing clients, or should we be exploring other means and interventions? Also, to advise how SHADs could be evaluated effectively.

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ENGAGING ARBORICULTURAL CONTRACTORS PROGRAMME

0930 to 1200 Indoor sessions

0900 Coffee

0930 Introductions and format for the day.

Health & Safety Regulations in Arboriculture,
including HSAWA, MHSWR, LOLER, PUWER, PPE, WAH regulations
and client responsibilities.

Training and certification available to arborists: - LANTRA, NPTC etc.

Industry 'best practice' and Codes of Practice relevant to arboriculture.

Contractor's viewpoint.

1100 **BREAK**

1115 Regulations and standards for 'on ground' and 'aerial' work.

PPE available to arborists.

1200 **LUNCH**

1300 to 1630 Outdoor sessions

1300 Risk Assessment for commercial arboriculture. (MHSWR)

Work at Height Scenarios.

Access into, moving around in and descent from trees. (Demonstration)

BREAK

1445 Use of top-handled chainsaws and handsaws in trees. (Demonstration)

1530 Specification for an 'Approved Contractor' and client responsibilities.

1545 Experience from Client Side

1600 Appraisal of seminar, and feedback.

1630 Disperse

NB Programme content and timings subject to change due to weather etc.