



EAB Stories and Lessons Learned...

Learning and sharing how communities are responding to Emerald Ash Borer

Part V: Staffing

“We had to use staff from other departments because we didn’t have the money upfront to contract out tree removals or to hire extra staff.” Tom Wilson, from Westland, Michigan, stressed how important and challenging it was to assign enough personnel to the task of facing EAB. He reassigned 4 people from his 18-person streets

department and sent them over to work on tree removals full-time. It was only when these additionally-staffed city crews fell behind that contracting was used to keep up with the work. A word of warning from his experience: “When contracting, keep in mind sudden, urgent, high-volume demand for service can make contracted removals more expensive and less available. Disreputable firms commonly appear.” Other municipalities shared an experience similar to Westland’s. They had to quickly pull and train staff from other departments for many months, even years. These and other communities affected by EAB were left with many tasks and services undone and major purchases deferred.

Issues with workload assignment are another important consideration when thinking about staffing. In Westland they found that a 4 person crew worked better than a three person crew. They had two 4-men crews assigned for tree removals and 1 foreman to oversee them. The foreman handled citizen complaints and scheduling logistics to make work load more efficient.

One final factor with staff was training. City crews were set up and trained mostly for tree trimming, not removal. Westland hired a personal trainer to prepare city staff to safely perform large tree removals. This training up front really paid off. His crews were removing over four trees a day with no injuries or accidents reported!

- Staff will be overwhelmed. You may need to borrow staff from other departments or contract out the removals.
- Local contractors will be busy and more expensive when EAB hits your area..
- Everything goes through one foreman, e.g. all complaints and scheduling.
- Training up front for large tree removals pays off in the end.

In 2004, six communities in Northeast Wisconsin joined together and hired ArborMaster Training, Inc. of New England to train their staff on chainsaw safety and proper rigging and removal techniques. Funded by a DNR urban forestry grant, the two 2-day training sessions benefited beginners and advanced tree care workers alike by the use of high-quality, in-depth and hands-on training sessions. Visit <http://www.arbormaster.com/> for more information. FISTA (Forest Industry Safety and Training Alliance, Inc.), a nationally recognized, non-profit safety training and education organization located in Rhinelander, Wisconsin is another organization that provides hands-on training opportunities. <http://www.fistausa.org/>

Many Wisconsin communities are preparing for EAB by sending their staff to related educational sessions around the state. Visit the DNR Urban Forestry website or contact your urban forestry coordinator for the most up to date educational opportunities. <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/forestry/UF/news/>

For a resource to help your community and residents prepare for staffing related to EAB issues, visit the Emerald Ash Borer Toolkit link at <http://dnr.wi.gov/forestry/uf/eab/> (Chapter 5 - Assessment, Chapter 8 - Removals & Utilization).

For a more detailed version of this story as well as other community’s removal stories, visit [*Lesson’s Shared - Journal Entries 3, 10.*](#)

Please share what your community is doing to prepare for EAB with others. Send ideas to Olivia Witthun, Urban Forestry Assistant olivia.witthun@wi.gov .

The fifth entry of EAB Stories and Lessons Learned was compiled by Northeast Region Urban Forestry Assistant Olivia Witthun and South Central Urban Forestry Assistant Kathy Gonzalez.