The California Utility Line Clearance Arborist Training

BACKGROUND

In June 2019, PG&E reached out to the Utility Arborist Association to seek information about training and education programs that could attract, train and retain an additional 3,000+ utility arborists as quickly as possible. PG&E contracted with Butte College Contract Education to lead development of state-wide training program with key stakeholders, known as the "Utility Line Clearance Arborist Training". Key stakeholder committee members include all SMUD, SoCal Edison, SDG&E California Utilities, IBEW 1245, 47 and 465, Utility Arborist Association, Tree Care Industry Academy, California Labor Agency, California Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Offices, 6 Prime California Utility Industry Contractor Employers and 10 California Community Colleges Contract Education units.

On October 2, 2019 Governor Gavin Newsom signed a series of bills aimed at improving California’s wildfire prevention, mitigation and response efforts. The 22 bills cover various areas for a comprehensive approach to these issues. On October 25, 2019 Governor announced $75 Million program to mitigate the impacts of PSPS events with specific allocations. To support these initiatives and accelerate line clearance throughout California, a statewide training program needs to be rolled-out alongside these efforts. The situation is similar to the 2014 Rapid Employment Strategies Pilot on Natural Disasters (RESPOND) implemented by ETP to help train workers to mitigate drought impacts.

SB247 Effective January 2020, a Line Clearance Tree Trimmer will make no less than first-step apprentice starting wages as Groundsperson at $21.63 and Arborist at $25.23. Locals 1245, 47 and 465, aligned to bring the whole state on the same economic packages, allowing workers to move around between the different jurisdictions without losing any of the paid benefits.

Statewide Curriculum Development and Delivery

October 2019 through March 2020, the core industry and Butte College design team created a industry 200 hour, 5 week Utility Line Clearance Arborist training based on a systematic DACUM approach (Developing A Curriculum). The pilot delivery in Northern California at Butte College was completed with six industry certified employers in August 2020. The statewide $6m contract with PG&E will support the delivery of training 3,000 newly skilled pre-apprentices across ten colleges through June 2022.

August 2020 through March 2021, the statewide program launched with Butte College, Mendocino colleges in the North, College of the Sequoias in the Central and San Bernardino Community College District in the South with support of key stakeholders PG&E, SoCal Edison, Utility Arborist Association, Tree Care Industry Association, local IBEW’s, Arborworks, Mountain F. Enterprises, Mowbray’s Tree Services, North American Training Solutions, and California Conservation Corp. The 5 module - 200 hour industry recognized training program prepares workers to perform one of the most hazardous jobs in California. The program includes certifications in OSHA10, First Aid & Safety, Flagger, and Electrical Hazard Awareness Program.

April 2021 through December 2021, the statewide program is funded to continue expansion serving San Diego CCD, El Camino CCD, Kern CCD, Los Rios CCD, and Shasta College.
Utility Line Clearance Arborist Workforce Need

California Community Colleges

1. College of the Redwoods
2. Butte College
3. Santa Rosa Junior College
4. Sierra College
5. Los Ríos Community College District
6. Shasta College
7. Mendocino College
8. Cabrillo College
9. College of the Sequoias
10. Cuesta College
11. Kern Community College District
12. Ventura College
13. College of the Canyons
14. El Camino College
15. Chaffey College
16. San Bernardino Community College District
17. Riverside College
18. San Diego Community College District

Total Completing Training by June 2022
2,950

(Workforce needs by county are indicated on map)
Utility Arborist Career Path

**First 18 months of employment:**
- CalOSHA Qualified Line Clearance Tree Trimmer Trainee
- Employer's on-the-job training program

**Training Source:** "TCIA Arborist Apprentice - Year 1"
- General Safety
- Arborist Equipment Fundamentals
- Introduction to Aerial Work - Aerial Lift Basics
- Introduction to Tree & Shrub Identification
- Pruning Fundamentals
- Intro to Aerial Work - Tree Climbing Basics

**Certifications Earned**
- Tree and CPM
- OSHA 10
- ISC, Flagger certification

- 1-year Membership
- International Society of Arboriculture (ISA)
- Utility Arborist Association (UAA)

**After 18 months of experience:**
- CalOSHA Qualified Line Clearance Tree Trimmer

**Employer's Qualified Line Clearance Tree Trimmer Certification Program**
- CalOSHA Title 3 Tree Pruning Safety Standards
- Electrical Hazard Training
- Tree Identification
- Ropes, Knots, & Climbing
- Aerial Rescue Techniques
- Safety use of Line Clearance Chain Saws

**Certifications Required**
- ISA certified

**Optional:** ISA certifications

**After 3 years of experience:**
- Preparing for Management Promotions (Certifications that require 3 years of full-time experience)

**Certified Arborist is required when promoted into management**

**Optional:** After qualifying as an ISA Certified Arborist

**After becoming a Certified Arborist:**
- Utility Specialist is required when promoted into management

**Certified Tree Safety Professional**

**Tree Risk Assessment Qualified (TRAQ) is required when promoted into management**

**Certified Arborist is required when promoted into management**

**Certification is the highest credential offered by ISA**

- This certification is not widely used by the Utility Arborists, but may be required for municipal contracts in California

- IBEW Certification (being developed)

- Tree removal, removal of overhead, and work of more difficult nature

- Tree Risk Assessment Qualified (TRAQ)

- Certified Tree Safety Professional

- Tree Care Industry Association