



### Meeting of Vegetation Control steering group 21 May 2008

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ACOP Safety and Health in Tree Work Part 2 recognises a shift from line mechanics undertaking vegetation control (VC) work around electrical lines, to this work being undertaken by competent arborists. The current ESITO VC qualifications contain both arborist and electrical knowledge, but have been very hard to complete due to provision issues, and have not been popular. Under the new ACOP they would be unsuitable due to their arborist content – ESITO are now required to replace them with a qualification which will enable arborists to work safely around lines. Those arborists will have achieved competency with all the necessary arborist skills through achieving the Hort ITO qualification with the Utility Workers strand, and having completed 300 logged hours of arborist work following achievement of the qualification.

The reasons behind this shift include aesthetic considerations – arborists make a better job of pruning than line mechanics – and the need to free up line mechanics to undertake line mechanic tasks. However, at the asset managers discretion, line mechanics will still be able to undertake VC, and they will still be called upon in emergency situations such as clearing storm damage, especially as arborists could well be preoccupied clearing damage elsewhere. Ultimately enforcement of the ACOP resides with asset managers – ‘cowboy’ contractors can undercut tenders and there will always be asset managers who will go for this cheaper option.

The ESITO qualification will need to include unit standards which cover the skills necessary to ensure arborists work safely around lines, and these need to reflect the competencies listed in the ACOP for Utility Arborists Level 1 (UAL1) (those working in the Vegetation Control zone up to the minimum approach distance) and Utility Arborists Level 2 (UAL2) (those using insulated tools to work within the insulated tool zone). Some procedures will vary according to employer – optional appropriate standards could meet these requirements.

#### **National Certificate in Horticulture (Arboriculture) with Utility Worker strand**

Having taken this qualification and completed 300 logged hours of arborist work, a trainee could be considered competent. However, if their intention is to work around lines there would be some gaps in their knowledge. There are also some



standards in this strand which are 'electrical' and there is a concern that having taken this strand a person may consider they have sufficient 'electrical' knowledge to work safely around lines. Therefore, while ESITO need to develop a new VC qualification, HITO also need to consider revising the Utility Worker strand. One skill which should be introduced to the Hort qualification is the specialist trimming technique required between conductors.

The 'electrical' standards are;

17151 - Demonstrate knowledge of safety requirements for tree work near electrical supply lines

17152 - Undertake tree work near electrical supply lines

It was considered that 17151 should remain in the Hort qual. For those Hort trainees not intending to work around lines it provided an awareness of the dangers of working close to lines, and sufficient knowledge to recognise different lines. For those intending to work around lines it raised their awareness of the dangers of electricity and the need to undertake further 'electrical' training before working near lines. It is important that the Hort qualification delivers this 'electrical safety message'.

17152 should be removed from the Hort qualification due to its electrical content and concerns that training providers delivering it are not electrically trained and ESITO experienced. HITO have drafted a new standard to cover tree work within the insulated tool zone, however, there is an approximate 2/3's overlap with 17152, which would make it unacceptable for NZQA registration unless it replaced 17152. The draft standard covers a number of skills and tasks such that the steering group consider it could be broken down and expanded to create several new standards. Areas to be covered include reclose blocks (knowledge required at UAL1 and an understanding at UAL2), permits, control room procedures (should be UAL2), and insulated tools. Emergency procedures and EWP rescue needs more coverage.

ESITO now needs to engage with HITO to discuss these matters.

### **Proposed NCES Vegetation Control**

This should be based on the UAL1 and UAL2 competencies detailed in the ACOP. However, not all arborists will want to train to UAL2, therefore this should be an optional strand.

The steering group considered there were some UAL1 competencies which were sufficiently covered by the Hort qualification, namely;



## Rigging

Dept. of Labour notifications

Identify, inspect and check, test, use and store tools, plant and equipment

Safely use non insulated tools and equipment near power lines

Tree aerial rescue near electrical hazards (US2774 – but need to investigate further whether 'electrical hazards are sufficiently covered')

One gap in the proposed qualification was earthing of lines and an understanding of basic earthing.

They also considered 'control room procedures' should sit under UAL2, and UAL2 should cover pruning techniques within the minimum approach distance, and should have a 'supervisory, leadership, and communication' element.

There are companies who would want their arborists to have 4WD skills, and those who would require the ability to winch trees. Suitable standards should be considered as an optional choice for such companies.

## Provision

BETAA, Omaka, Utilitech. Treescape also do some training. BETAA deliver 10507, 10508, 10538, 10542, 12300, 18030, 18031, 18032, 18038, 18274, and 18276 (Mike Burke to be contacted for input into draft qualification).

## Actions

A wider 'correspondence' steering group to be established to validate draft qualification. ***Steering group members to provide names of people who should be in the wider group.***

Draft unit standards to be written to cover insulated tools etc.

ESITO to meet with HITO, and BETAA.

Martin to email Tim with details of suppliers (in order to draft standard covering maintenance, inspection and care of tools)

ESITO to undertake comparison against UK and Aust qualifications.

