

PROFILE

JPM Tree Service

North Vancouver, BC

Tree company doesn't cut corners on health and safety

Certified arborist John Martyn has an acronym that keeps him and his JPM Tree Service employees healthy and safe whether they're up a tree or on the ground: HALT. It stands for Hungry, Angry, Lonely, or Tired.

"If you're any one of those things," says Martyn, "you need to halt and take a break because your mind won't be on the job. And when you're working in a tree with a chainsaw that can cut your ropes in the blink of an eye, you need to be mentally and physically alert."

JPM has operated in the Lower Mainland for the past seven years, doing custom tree pruning for residential and commercial properties, preparing hazardous-tree consultation reports, and sometimes doing topiary projects, creating designs out of bushes and trees. Martyn knows that to run a successful service-based business, you need to be competitive and provide reliable service, which means keeping your employees healthy and on the job. That's where HALT comes in.

Tree-care can be hard physical work. "An employee will typically have to move a ton of brush in a day, and it's easy to get careless if you're hungry. It may seem like a simple thing, but I require my employees to bring a lunch, so they can keep their energy up," says Martyn. He also trains employees not to get angry at machines. "They'll either break or they'll bite you back," he says. If something isn't working, it's best to find another machine or just step away from the task for a while and cool down.

Tree-care work can also be a lonely business, so Martyn tries to ensure that his workers spend as much of the workday as possible working with people — clients, himself, or other workers. Martyn and his workers also learn to recognize when they're tired. "Know when to take a break," he says, "especially in hot weather."

There's another challenge that JPM faces that isn't covered by HALT — new worksites with curious clients who want to hang around under the trees, often with their kids or dogs running around, and that can be both distracting and dangerous. "We have a strict policy that non-employees stay out of our danger zone."

JPM Tree Service uses simple principles but they've helped the company avoid work-related accidents and injuries and keep a good track record with the WCB. "It's important that my workers and I operate safely," says Martyn. "We want to avoid anyone getting hurt. Clients want a safe tree service, so safety means more referrals. An accident could increase my costs for insurance, equipment repairs and retraining, but most importantly, it would really cut into my time — the thing I need most to run a small business." And that's not the kind of cuts JPM Tree Service likes. "For me, a safe company is a profitable company."

For more information please contact the Small Business Service Centre at:

E-mail: smallbiz@wcb.bc.ca

Phone: 604 214-6912 in the Lower Mainland
or 1 888 621-7233 local 6912, toll-free in BC

