



What do Tour des Trees riders and Utility Arborists have in common? Hazards!

I was on vacation through much of September, riding in the Tour des Trees to raise funds for the Tree Research and Education Endowment Fund. 80 or so riders rode the 450 mile Tour des Trees through Tennessee and Kentucky – without even having to open a first aid kit! This diverse group of cyclists, which included several utility arborists, kept a focus on safety throughout the Tour. Riding on open roads and through busy cities presents many hazards, but through planning, preparation, and execution, we got through it safely.

I tacked on a week of riding on either side of the Tour just for the fun of it. So I had a lot of time to reflect as I bicycled over 1300 miles – also incident free. I had time to think about our vegetation program at BC Hydro and how we had been celebrating significant injury free periods in both the distribution and transmission programs. In distribution we went 13 months without an injury, and 20 months with only one. In transmission we also went 20 months with only one injury. Then July hit us with six injuries, two of them very serious, across transmission and distribution. August brought two more injuries.

What went wrong, I asked myself. Did we; the collective “we” of BC Hydro and our contractors do something wrong? What do we need to change to continue the string of zeros? Then I thought about the things I value in our safety program – BC Hydro employees and contractors all invested in having everyone come home safe every day, an atmosphere of collaboration where we focus on learning from individual incidents – and sharing those lessons, and an emphasis on Good Catches – spotting potential hazards and dealing with them before they cause a Near Miss or an Incident. And I realized that these form a great foundation for a successful safety program. We don’t need to change our foundation or our focus, but we all need to be conscious every day of keeping that focus top of mind. I’ve said it before that nobody plans to get hurt when they go to work, but it is the more proactive planning to NOT get hurt that really makes the difference.

So, stay safe, and PLAN to not get hurt.

Photo credit: Coleman Camp

Graham, Philip Phil.Graham@bchydro.com