



## **DNR Offers Marylanders Tips On Choosing A Licensed Tree Expert** *Recent law alters definition of tree expert to include tree removal*

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ANNAPOLIS — Marylanders looking to hire someone for tree removal or care need to be aware that the law concerning Maryland Tree Experts has changed. Under the old law, a person could remove a tree without being a Licensed Tree Expert. However, a bill passed now requires that persons performing tree care or removal for hire must be licensed by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

The new law is designed to protect consumers from persons performing tree care or removal who are not licensed or insured. This is especially important because if an unlicensed Tree Expert performs work and something goes wrong (such as a tree falling on a house), it may be difficult to hold them liable. Improper tree care can take many years to correct and in some cases, it can't be corrected.

“Contracting with an unlicensed firm is always risky and what seemed like a ‘good deal’ on tree work could turn into a nightmare after property damage or injury occurs at the hands of someone with no insurance or regulatory oversight,” said Steven W. Koehn, Director of the Maryland DNR Forest Service. “The new law provides added protection to both consumers and workers in the tree care industry; it’s also one of the best changes we’ve seen in this industry in many years.”

There are some ways to tell if a person whom you are considering contracting with for tree care is licensed or not. Follow these guidelines to ensure you are working with only a Maryland Licensed Tree Expert.

1. Ask to see their Tree Expert license. Any Licensed Tree Expert will carry a card that contains their three-digit Expert number and verifies their status as being licensed. Call DNR if you are not satisfied with the answer you receive, the Department maintains a complete list of Licensed Tree Experts.
2. Ask for proof of insurance. A Licensed Tree Expert will have personal and property damage insurance, as well as worker’s compensation insurance.
3. Ask for references. Find out where the company or person has done work similar to the work you are requesting. Don’t hesitate to check references or visit other sites where the company or individual has done tree work.
4. Get an estimate in writing. Licensed Tree Experts are required to enter into a written contract with a client. Be sure to read the contract carefully and make sure it includes information on when the work will be started and completed, who is responsible for clean-up, the total price and an hourly rate if more work needs to be done.
5. Be wary of individuals who solicit business door-to-door. While these individuals may appear to be offering lower costs for tree care services, be assured it’s no bargain. A person soliciting business door-to-door will often give a cell phone number and no other means of contact, thereby making it difficult to find them should a problem arise. Licensed Tree Experts must have an address of record and other contact info on file with the Department.

The Maryland DNR Forest Service maintains a list of nearly 600 Licensed Tree Experts throughout the state so finding one near you is easy. To search for a Tree Expert by type, company name or county, visit <http://dnrweb.dnr.state.md.us/forests/oflists/lte/treeexpert.html>. As a value-added benefit to consumers, the Tree Expert List contains additional information about the licensed tree experts linked from their business names. Any questions about Maryland Licensed Tree Experts should be directed to Mike Galvin, Supervisor, Urban & Community Forestry, at 410-260-8507.

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