

Florida Chapter ISA

FLORIDA LAW - CHAPTER 2019-155
Committee Substitute for House Bill No. 1159

Position Paper

Recent legislative action, CHAPTER 2019-155, Committee Substitute for House Bill No. 1159, has charged ISA Certified Arborists with the authority to advise residential tree owners about the potential risk their tree(s) pose to people and/or property prior to pruning or removal.

For most of our existence, arborists have toiled in virtual anonymity, largely regarded by society as ‘tree cutters’ lacking an understanding of tree science. The ISA Certified Arborist program came along in 1992 and in less than 30 years elevated a small (about 15%) but important segment of those ‘trees cutters’ into a credentialed and respected green industry. The Florida Legislature including the house, senate, and governor, with support from the insurance and construction industries, now trust ISA Certified Arborists more than local government and any other Florida green industry group to help residents make the right decision with regard to their trees. This is an enormous societal evolution for many reasons but most importantly it will produce a positive impact on public safety while preserving our urban forest.

The Florida Chapter ISA (Chapter) understands the significance of this responsibility and will aid our members and ISA Certified Arborists (CAs) with this important task. The Chapter is a not-for-profit 501(c)3 Florida Corporation and, as such, is limited in the ability to lobby. The Chapter is, however, quite adept at education. We plan to use this strength and this unique opportunity to educate our Chapter members, CAs and Florida residential tree owners regarding this new law and its impact on one of Florida’s most valuable assets, our urban forest.

The Chapter plans to do the following:

1. Public Awareness Campaign – Residential Tree Owners

Action: Provide press releases that will go out state-wide on a regular basis.

- a. Teach tree owners that trees are not inherently dangerous. Trees can have or can develop defects that may cause trees or tree parts to fail. Trees should be assessed in order to identify defects and make mitigation recommendations to reduce the risks of failure.
- b. Help residential tree owners acquire the services of a CA that has the qualifications to assess the risk their tree(s) may pose.
- c. Make residential tree owners aware of the Tree Risk Assessment Qualification (TRAQ) and its benefits.

2. Member Awareness Campaign – Chapter Members and CAs

Action: Develop presentations including subjects related to ethics and professionalism. These presentations will be incorporated into our existing scheduled continuing education seminars, starting in August of 2019. The presentations will teach:

- a. “Just Because you Are Certified, Doesn’t Mean You are Qualified” – Assisting CAs to determine if they have the knowledge necessary to determine if a tree is “dangerous” or a risk.
 - b. Continue to inform CAs about the importance of TRAQ and how to obtain the qualification.
3. Violation Procedures
- Action: Send press releases for the public that will go out state-wide on a regular basis as well as broad educational efforts geared towards CAs.
- a. Residential Tree Owners – Teach consumers of tree services how our credentialing programs function and encourage them to pursue violators using International ISA’s existing Ethics and Integrity Violations program.
 - i. Examples of violations
 - ii. Reporting procedures
 - b. Chapter Members and CAs – Remind our members of International ISA’s existing Ethics and Integrity Violations program and how to use the program to self-police our industry.
 - i. Examples of violations
 - ii. Reporting procedures
 - iii. Branding and Style Guide rules and procedures

The next six months to a year are going to be tumultuous in Florida, but the dust will settle and a new normal will become accepted. However, the long view of all this change tells a very different story and it is monumental for ISA and our credentialing programs. We believe, in the final assessment a few years from now, that ISA Certified Arborists will be judged the right group to provide these needed professional services.