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TOWN OF WATERTOWN  
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OFFICE OF THE TREE WARDEN

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**Memorandum**

To: Trees for Watertown, NSTAR Electric and Gas Corporation

From: Christopher Hayward, Tree Warden

Subject: **Utility Line Clearance – Watertown MA**

Date: August 5, 2010

Due to the recent debates about standards used by Nstar in Watertown to prune trees around the power lines I spoke with several town tree wardens about what their communities expect from Nstar and what standards are being used. I spoke with individuals from the Town of Brookline, Town of Acton, Town of Lincoln, City of Newton and the City of Cambridge, None of these communities have any home grown dimensional standards that Nstar has been required to follow when it comes to utility line pruning.

The only community that had any additional requirement was the City of Cambridge which requires Nstar to provide a certified arborist with each tree pruning crew. The certified arborist then acts as the first line of communication with both concerned residents and the tree warden. The Tree Warden in Cambridge stated that this requirement has been very helpful in calming tense situations.

After my discussions with the communities listed above and also reviewing many national pruning standards and arboricultural journals, I am requesting that Nstar and any other utility line pruners in Watertown please comply with the following requests when doing work in our community:

1. Please have a certified arborist (either Massachusetts or ISA certified) as part of each pruning crew. The City of Cambridge has found decent success with this requirement and hopefully Watertown will as well.
2. Please consider the stress level of our urban forest. During the summer months our street trees are under extreme stress due to many factors. Pruning

in most cases up to one third of the canopy of these trees during the heat of the summer only adds to their stress. When scheduling utility line pruning in urban locations, please attempt to conduct this work in the spring or the fall when the trees are not as stressed.

3. Please consider the type of tree and relative stress level of that tree before pruning. In most cases the 8-8-12 standard is much too aggressive for these stressed trees to withstand. The rate of decline occurs much faster when the trees are aggressively pruned.
4. Please make every effort to notify private property owners that their private tree requires pruning ahead of time. In many cases, if the private owner knew the pruning was needed, the job would be completed by the property owner's hired certified line clearance arborist.

I ask that Nstar make every effort to comply with these requests as closely as possible. The community must understand that Nstar and other utility companies have a right to maintain their property. Many times a tree will need to be drastically pruned depending on its condition, how frequently it has been pruned and to what risk its current state put the utility wires in. I feel that with better communication on both the utility company's and tree warden's part we can come to agreeable terms.

Thank you,

Christopher Hayward, MCA  
Watertown Tree Warden