

# Be Prepared: Emergency Response & Safe Work Practices

By David W. Graham, ASLA

During the latest ISA Annual Conference & Trade Show in Providence, Rhode Island, there were several Sunday workshops available. One of the workshops was entitled, "Emergency Response and Aerial Rescue," and included discussions many of the attendees had never engaged in before.

The session began with a real-time, live-action scenario in a downtown park that included a "response" by the local fire department. The intent of the four instructors, from North American Training Solutions, was to genuinely expose those in attendance to an actual emergency scene. As the scenario unfolded, those at the workshop quickly realized they were witnessing a number of things that are simply not addressed over the course of everyday field work. For example, the crew member that caused the accident was so distraught he became a liability to the scene and had to be "talked down" in order to be useful.

Attendees were shown how vital they can be to the professional rescuers and how the arborist, as the resource on-site, can be better prepared to perform. After the dramatization, topics of conversation including statistics, real-life experiences, first-aid supplies, and emergency action planning.

Just as the discussions began to taper and the session appeared to wind down, the instructors had another surprise for the workshop. A special guest had agreed to participate in the day! Jerry Kelly has been involved in the field of arboriculture for many, many years. He



**Jerry Kelly speaks to a captive audience about the importance of climber safety.**

was a production climber and a guy you could count on to be safe and efficient. However, ten months before ISA Providence, Jerry accidentally cut his own climbing line with a hand saw and fell 40 feet (12.2 m); he is now a quadriplegic.

As he and his wife came forward, Jerry in his motorized wheelchair, he commanded the undivided attention of everyone in the audience. As Jerry began to introduce himself and speak about his accident, there was a certainty that Jerry was there to help, and to warn others to be diligent and dis-

ciplined. As he continued, and slowed his pace a little by the effort to breathe, he made it clear that he was not bitter but rather determined to make a difference in the industry he loves.

Jerry was blunt. He asked if any of us had ever said, "We've got to finish this job today," warning of the danger of hurrying for money's sake. A few hands were raised and people wondered how they could face a quadriplegic and justify the risk of unsafe operations. Jerry finished by encouraging everyone, from new employee to company owner, to be committed to safety. It is too great a risk, to yourself and those who love you, to be complacent and not actively pursue safer working operations. Jerry made some things shockingly clear: 1) Just because we are safety conscious doesn't mean we are applying and pursuing safety as well as we should, 2) one accident affects many, many people, and 3) we all have ways we can improve our daily work practices. **AN**

## Back on His Feet: Krawczyk's Comeback

This year's New York State Tree Climbing Championship, which would later determine who would represent the ISA NY Chapter at the ITCC, featured a miraculous comeback.

Brian Krawczyk's story is worth noting.

Krawczyk suffered near-fatal injuries last year after a recreational ice climbing fall. Having previously won New York's tree climbing event in 2006 and 2007, the defending champ was sidelined with injuries to his back, pelvis, ribs, and ankles. In fact, his injuries were so severe that doctors feared whether Krawczyk would ever walk again, let alone climb trees. But this past June, the arborist proved that where there's a will there's definitely a way.

"It's a real testament to Brian's resilience, determination, and physical condition," Dave Dailey, President Birchcrest Tree & Landscape,

where Krawczyk works as a tree consultant, commented. "That he returned to work this season, competed in the state championship, and compete[d] for the international prize against the toughest, most experienced tree climbers in the world."

Krawczyk, who lives in Greece, New York with his wife Colleen, is a tree climber and foreman at Birchcrest. He has been a climber for seven years. He and Jeremy Passinault, another top climber at the ISA NY Chapter climbing championships this year, are among nine Certified Arborists on the Birchcrest Tree & Landscape staff. **AN**



**Brian Krawczyk competing in the New York championship that earned him a trip to the international competition in Providence, RI.**