

# POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

## Hereford declares war on dead trees

State foresters estimate there are more than 8 billion trees in Pennsylvania, including 308 million ash trees. Eventually, they will all die.

After an insect called the emerald ash borer was accidentally imported into Michigan from China in 2002, the pest spread all across the country, prematurely killing hundreds of millions of ash trees.

Any tree can fall over or lose limbs, but dead ones are especially prone to collapse. Of course, during storms, the canopy of a healthy tree can act like a sail and pull the tree over, usually in rain-saturated soil.

The Hereford Township supervisors have created an uproar by ordering township residents to cut down dead trees on their properties, especially ash. The township has hired an arborist to mark all the ashes with paint. It's mailing notices to property owners to remove them.

Those who fail to comply can be fined, and the township can remove the trees at property owner expense.

Hereford is heavily wooded, so we're probably talking hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The supervisors are taking a curiously proactive approach. They may use up a lot of the township's time and resources trying to enforce this.

Pottstown, like Hereford and most other Pennsylvania municipalities, makes property owners responsible for maintaining trees on their properties, including those in the public right of way.

Pottstown has 2,800 street trees, and thousands more in private yards.

Yet in recent years, no one has been cited to remove a tree, living or dead.

From time to time, Trees Inc., a Pottstown non-profit, has removed dead trees in the public right of way. It is also treating about 130 ash trees in the public right of way with an insecticide that kills the ash borer and keeps the trees healthy.

So just what are the odds of a tree or a limb falling on someone?

It happens, to be sure.

But it's rare.

The most recent mortality figures from the Pennsylvania Department of Health show that in 2019, 8,564

people died in accidents.

About half of those "accidents" were drug overdoses.

Here are some others:

Falls: 2,020

Traffic fatalities: 1,118.

Choking: 310

Smoke inhalation: 112

Drowning: 88

Lightning: 2

There is no category for being hit by a falling tree or tree limb, so it's hard to say how many, if any, Pennsylvanians died that way in 2019.

Nationally, the federal government reports about 100 fatalities annually from falling trees or branches. This is in a country of 330 million people.

Is Hereford over-reacting? Some might say so.



Commentary by  
Tom Hylton



**POTTSTOWN PARKS DEPARTMENT has removed more than 80 ash trees at Riverfront Park in recent years.**



**DEAD ASH TREES in front yards on North Washington Street.**



**ASH TREES on Charlotte St are injected with a pesticide to keep them healthy.**