



# JARRAFF

All-Terrain Tree Trimmer



5 MODELS

IN THE FIELD

ROW MAINTENANCE

4x4 JARRAFF

## Wolf Tree Experts: Providing Customer Service and Employee Safety for 81 Years

Wolf Tree Experts, Inc., Knoxville, Tenn., has a deep history in the tree trimming industry. The company was founded in 1926 by Jacob L. Wolf. He started with residential jobs, expanding to utility and telephone company contracts when his sons joined the business. Now, in its third generation, the company is still growing and setting high standards in the process. Tom Wolf, president of Wolf Tree said, "Our company works to provide a rewarding, satisfying and safe working environment for our employees, and to exceed the expectations of our customers to help ensure reliable, uninterrupted electric service over our entire service area."

### Territories & Projects

This service area covers 12 states in the southeast corner of the United States. To do this successfully the company has broken the territory into four regions. A regional manager is assigned to each one of these sections to oversee the projects. Each regional manager is also responsible for 125 to 175 of Wolf Tree's 650 employees. "Having a manager in each area helps immensely in maintaining our production goals and schedules," said Safety Director Louis Geasland, "It is much easier for each manager to handle 7 to 10 contracts in his region than for all of them to go through the central office."

Covering a large service area also means taking on a variety of jobs. Wolf Tree provides services under time-and-material contracts, lump-sum arrangements or a per-unit basis. Most of Wolf Tree's customers consist of municipal electric distributors, electric cooperatives and investor owned utilities. These companies have anywhere from 300 miles of line to thousands of miles of line. Regardless of the size of the project, Wolf Tree keeps these lines clear. "We help keep the lights on, in a nut shell. Trees are the leading cause of power outages, and we provide the services to utilities to keep the trees out of power lines. In the event of a storm we clear the way to get the power back on," Wolf said.

Wolf Tree crews are prepared to move in as soon as a storm blows over. "When natural disasters hit, we like to be ready," said Wolf. After Hurricane Katrina hit in 2005, 300 Wolf Tree employees

relocated to clean up after the storm. Hurricanes aren't the only storms Wolf Tree is prepared to handle. "In January and February 2007, we transferred more than 100 Wolf Tree employees to Oklahoma and Missouri to help restore power following a major ice storm," he said. In these situations crews must be even



Wolf Tree Experts, Inc. services 12 states utilizing tree trimmers, lift trucks, brush chippers and other pieces of ground clearing equipment.

more dedicated to their work. It is not unusual for crews to work all day and night to return power to customers after a storm.

### Equipment & Maintenance

Reliable equipment plays a big role in returning power after a storm, as well as maintaining power. "In the event of an ice storm our Jarraffs [ All Terrain Tree Trimmer (Jarraff Industries, St. Peter, Minn.)] really help a lot. They keep the guy out of the danger area," said Wolf. Wolf Tree uses nine Jarraffs, five additional mechanical trimmers, lift trucks, brush chippers and other pieces of ground clearing equipment. Each piece of equipment proves to be necessary to Wolf Tree's operations. Bucket trucks are used in urban areas to keep the power lines clean. The mechanical trimmers come into play in rural areas. After the branches in these areas are trimmed, mowers come in to clean up the floor of the right-of-way.

Because Wolf Tree depends heavily on their equipment, it is important that each piece is maintained properly. Area Manager Cliff Charrier said, "We keep the mechanical trimmers greased daily. Also, we keep debris cleaned off of the equipment, so it

## PROJECT PROFILE:

- Contractor:** Wolf Tree Experts, Inc.,
- Location:** Knoxville, Tenn
- Equipment Used:** Jarraff 4 Wheel Drive All-Terrain Tree Trimmer
- Specifications:** Row Maintenance, 12 State Service Area

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Wolf Tree owns nine Jarraff All-Terrain Tree Trimmers in addition to five other mechanical trimmers.

doesn't sit there and dry. If you don't, you're going to have a fire there." Charrier's crew spends one to two hours at the end of every week cleaning and maintaining their equipment. "This helps control breakdowns," he said. The company has eight people working in the maintenance department who service the equipment. However, the majority of repairs are outsourced.

Given the amount of equipment the company uses, maintenance can prove to be difficult; for this reason manufacturer support is essential. "If we have any problems in the field, we can call Jarraff Industries. Most of the time they can coach us through it right there on the job site, if it's not anything major. They help us out a lot with maintenance," said Charrier. Many times, communicating mechanical problems to a manufacturer can be difficult. Being able to work with manufacturers is integral to preventing unnecessary downtime.

### Efficiency

Being able to repair equipment quickly and properly improves the company's efficiency. If equipment is down, crews are unable to work to their full potential. This is especially true when a mechanical trimmer needs repair, as it is 3 to 5 times more efficient than an aerial lift crew. While these lift crews can clear a mile of line per week, a mechanical trimmer can clear five miles. "There is no match speed wise. For example, you could take a bucket crew to go



Mechanical tree trimmers keep Wolf Tree's crews on the ground and out of harms way.

in and trim a tree. It might take you an hour to two hours to trim that tree, and that Jarraff could have it trimmed in 15 minutes," Charrier said. Efficiency plays a key role in fulfilling Wolf Tree's duty of ensuring reliable and uninterrupted electrical service for their customers.

### Safety

Wolf is adamant about making safety, as well as reliable service, a priority.

He said, "The bottom line is, everything we do has to hinge on the safe work performance of the crews." With no fatalities for the past 25 years, the company has a better than average safety record. "That is the ultimate failure. If we have a fatality, we let our people down," he said. It is Wolf Tree's emphasis on safety that led them to receive an experience modification rating 14 percent above the average tree trimming company. (Insurance companies use this experience modification rating to determine workers compensation premiums.) The company uses both equipment and training to maintain their high safety standards.

The use of a mechanical trimmer allows crews to stay on the ground, 75 feet away from the power lines. "With a mechanical trimmer the man is out of harms way in a protective cab. The guy in a bucket or tied to a tree is, a lot of times, within 10 feet of high-voltage electric lines," said Wolf.

In addition to complying with all local, state and federal safety laws and regulations, Wolf Tree ensures worker safety through regular evaluations. "One thing Louis [Geasland] has put in place that does go above and beyond what most companies would do are the safety evaluations," said Wolf. These evaluations focus on safe work behavior in an attempt to address issues before they lead to an accident. "You can have all the safety rules and regulations, but if you can't actually see them in application in the field, it doesn't really have much of an affect," Geasland said.

The company further ensures a safe work environment through its hiring process. Wolf Tree hires only people with professional qualities and requires that they pass a drug test. Wolf Tree also holds Tree Care Industry safety meetings every week to discuss safety issues. The extensive training required by Wolf Tree includes first aid and CPR as well as equipment training. It is Wolf Tree's dedication to safety and service that has kept them in the business for 81 years.

By Eliza Koch



After the branches are trimmed, Wolf Tree uses mowers to clean up the floor of the right-of-way.

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