



## “CAN WE TALK? ”

### A TRUE STORY THAT NEEDS TO BE SHARED

This is directed to all of us that live in older neighborhoods, where our trees are so old some reach heights of 50' tall and dwarf our homes. A couple of days ago my wife and our 18month-old granddaughter were in our back yard. Being pushed in the swing, playing in the sandbox and experiencing the sounds and smells of the outdoors for the first time are her favorite things to do. The spring weather was beautiful until the wind came up, they toughed it out for as long as they could before going inside. Minutes later, with a deafening crack, a branch fell to the ground from about 25' in the air. The branch landed right where our little granddaughter had been, moments before. The branch was not from one of our enormous trees, but from the neighbor's tree. I looked across the yard at the potential instrument of doom for a couple of days before I could make myself walk over to it. I marched over to the branch with every intention of hurling it over the 6' privacy fence into our neighbor's back yard, where the tree it fell from is located. The branch resembled a 12' long set of antlers with 8 points each as sharp as a spear. The branch had been dead for so long there was no bark left on it. It was smooth and looked more like barn wood, grey in color. Envisioning what could have happened, I wasn't angry anymore but felt thankful that my wife and granddaughter were not in the yard when it fell. Cleaning it up I realized that it weighed at least 25 lbs. and was about 6" in diameter – more than enough lumber to do serious damage to any person it might have landed on. So, I'm asking all of us, when we're in the yard this Spring raking, aerating, fertilizing etc. to take a few minutes and look up. As trees age some of the branches die off and need to be trimmed by a professional. Please don't rely on wind and heavy spring snow to trim your trees, take a more proactive approach to this important safety issue. Hundreds of thousands of branches fall onto houses and vehicles every year costing millions of dollars in insurance claims. In my case the loss could have been immeasurable.

## **OLDER HOMES AND ATTIC VENTILATION**

During the month of March 2010 there were 649 reroof permits issued in El Paso County. Most homes built in the 1800's and early 1900's were built without attic ventilation. Venting an attic will not only keep your home cooler in the summer, but will prolong the life of your roofing materials. The current code requires 1 square foot of attic vents per 150 square feet of living space on the top level of a home. If 50% of the venting is at the eave and 50% is located at the ridge the requirement is cut in half, which would be 1 square foot per 300 square foot of living area. The high and low venting is the preferred method but in some cases is not feasible. If you are looking to have your home re-roofed ask your roofing contractor for a price to add the vents while they are re-roofing your house. Adding attic ventilation is not required as part of a re-roof so your insurance may not cover the added cost. However, in my opinion, the benefits justify the (typically slight) added cost. Also; be aware that when a re-roof inspection is requested it may take several weeks before the inspection is performed. Due to the volume of re-roof permits the inspections are typically fit in to the inspections schedule when the inspector can make time. I often recommend that you not make final payment until the work is inspected, with roofing inspections potentially taking a week or more to complete, your roofing contractor may pressure you for payment before that final inspection has been performed. As inconvenient as it may be I still recommend that you wait for the final inspection to pass before issuing final payment for the job. Additionally, please remember to get several bids for any work you plan to have done and it's always a good idea to check with the Better Business Bureau and RBD to see if the contractor you are considering is licensed to perform the work in El Paso County.

## **WHAT IS A BACKFLOW PREVENTER?**

If, like me, you're tired of dragging a hose around your yard it may be time to put in a sprinkling system to save you time and water. Whether you attempt this yourself or hire it done a backflow preventer is required. A backflow preventer does just what the name implies. It prevents contaminated water from being siphoned back into your household (domestic) water and possibly poisoning the occupants. As this is a life safety issue, a permit and inspection is required. If you are doing the work yourself, and the house is your primary residence, you can purchase a homeowner permit to do this work. If you hire a contractor to do the work they will need to have a Water Connected Appliance license with RBD in order to purchase a permit. You can contact the licensing department at RBD to check to see if any contractor you may be considering has the appropriate license to perform the work for you.

All of the previous 'CAN WE TALK' columns are available on our website [www.pprbd.org](http://www.pprbd.org) under the PPRBD title.

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