



# ACRT<sup>INC</sup>

Independent Utility Vegetation Management  
ASSESSMENT • CONSULTING • REPRESENTATION • TRAINING

1333 Home Avenue  
Akron, Ohio 44310

[www.acrtinc.com](http://www.acrtinc.com)

## Fall 2010

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# Current

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## An Active Approach

*Communicating Effectively with Utility Landowners*

For utility companies, utility vegetation management (UVM) means helping landowners understand why their trees must be managed. Most landowners have an immediate negative response to UVM crews. The first rule for communicating with landowners is to engage them in person. The second rule is to send representatives dressed appropriately and trained to speak for you. Since landowners rarely understand UVM, it is important that the representatives listen actively.

Arborists and representatives should speak clearly and make every effort to repeat what is being said. Also, pay attention to body language and behavior. Noticing these things enables a greater understanding of a person's message. While you may not agree with what is being discussed, it is important that you make them feel that you comprehend their frustrations.

To complete the conversation, summarize it by pulling together and organizing major ideas, facts and feelings. The objective is to show the landowner compassion and ensure you understand his or her situation. Unfortunately, active listening does not work in all situations.

The best way to deal with an angry customer is to evaluate the specific action only and then take

immediate action. The utility arborist or company ambassador may have no control over the situation. In this case, the only option is to be direct. With proactive communication and active listening, you can help elevate the company's brand image, facilitate positive relationships with customers and reduce refusals.

## ACRT & NES

*Partners in Patronage for Flood Relief*

The Nashville, Tennessee flooding earlier this May was the worst the area has seen in over 70 years. ACRT gave its time and support to Nashville Electric Service (NES)—the local power utility, whose main cause of outages was due to rising floodwaters rather than downed trees.

NES held a benefit raffle to which ACRT donated a Panasonic 32" flat-screen TV and an ASUS laptop to be auctioned off. Held at the NES headquarters in downtown Nashville, hundreds of people attended and \$30,000 was raised in an astounding display of support for the 30 NES employees who lost homes and loved ones.

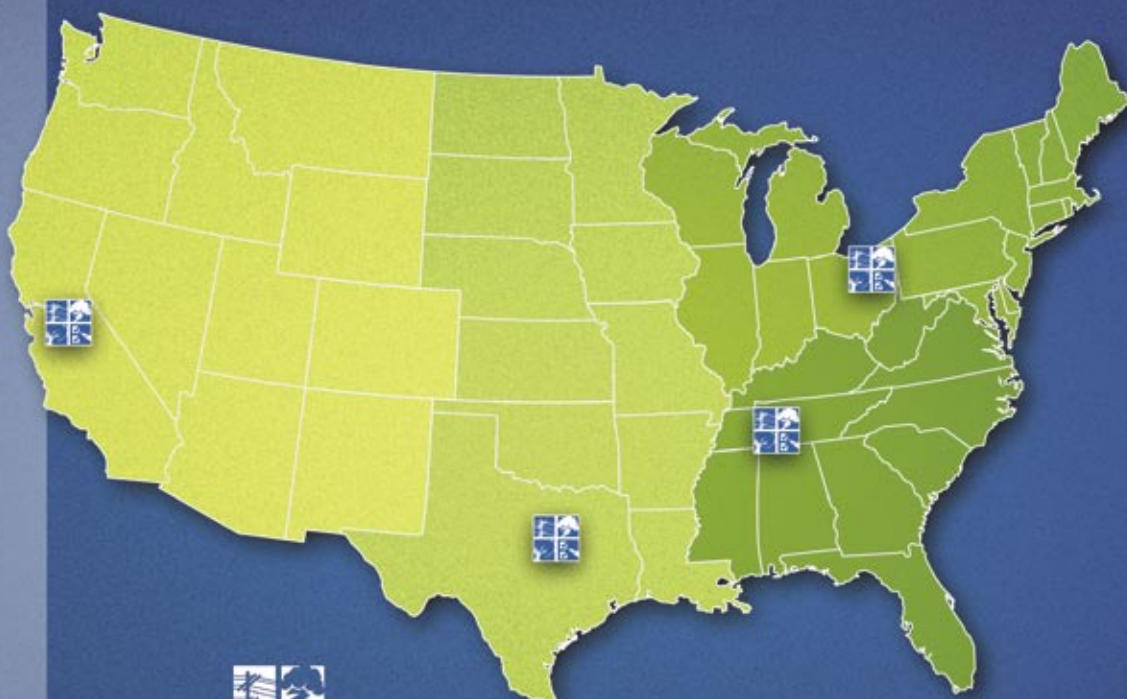
## Sales Territories

**West**  
William E. Litel,  
Business Development Manager  
730 S. Beckman Rd., Suite A  
Lodi, CA 95240  
Office (209) 263-1554  
Fax (209) 367-4194  
blitel@acrtinc.com

**Southeast**  
Tim Lawyer,  
Business Development Manager  
503 E. Ligon Dr.  
Nashville, TN 37204  
Office (800) 622-2562, ext. 443  
Direct (615) 780-9193  
Cell (615) 604-9766  
tlawyer@acrtinc.com

**Southwest**  
Joe Marshall,  
Sales Manager  
1333 Home Avenue  
Akron, OH 44310  
Office (800) 622-2562, ext. 297  
Cell (330) 618-3110  
jmarshall@acrtinc.com

**Northeast**  
Kevin Jones,  
Business Development Manager  
1333 Home Avenue  
Akron, OH 44310  
Office (800) 622-2562, ext. 327  
Cell (330) 703-6522  
kjones@acrtinc.com



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## Plugged In: Todd Jones

*How Passion and Profession Work Together*

Chief Operating Officer Todd Jones knows ACRT inside and out. Starting as an entry-level work planner in Indiana in May of 1994, he spent two years patrolling lines on what was then the Public Service Company of Indiana account. When ACRT began operations out West, an opportunity arose in California and he transferred.



"For the better part of 10 years I progressed up through the operational levels," Jones said. "I moved from certified utility forester to Supervisor to Manager to Vice President and then finally to Chief Operations Officer, which was when I relocated to Akron, Ohio in 2005. I still miss the West Coast."

Jones and the other board members provide counsel on risk management, generating sales and business development opportunities.

"We are focused on taking ACRT forward in our industry," Jones said. "We want to achieve sustainable growth, be on the front edge of any changes in our industry and also be in a position to capitalize on them. This is not always easy."

Jones' experience on the board has been extremely positive, educational and rewarding. He feels fortunate to be in a position that helps continue the company on its path to success.

"As an employee that started at the ground level of ACRT, I can help the board to understand how company decisions affect everyone. I can also see how difficult these decisions can become when everything has to be balanced. After all, we have an obligation to be fair to ACRT as well," Jones said. "I have found all the different perspectives to be very helpful to ACRT and I hope mine has been as well."

## Committed to Growth

*ACRT Welcomes New HR Director*

"My role and the role of human resources is to make others successful. Whether it be coaching, leadership or the development of new policies, procedures and programs, it's all about the success of others."



Bob Chess is ACRT's new Human Resources Director. Prior to joining ACRT, Chess served nearly 20 years in the less-than-truckload (LTL) transportation industry. His new HR Director position combines many roles—coaching, employee development, managing change and leadership—into one function.

"I have the opportunity to coach people every day. I use a collaborative style to learn about them, their challenges and what they're up against. We're in a service industry, so it's all about people."

For Chess, the growth and development of ACRT employees is just as important as the growth and development of ACRT itself. He believes establishing a high level of credibility is critical. Chess is confident that ACRT will move closer to fulfilling its strategic plan as well as achieving significant growth in value and service for utilities. Chess cites his biggest challenge as his most exciting—preparing the organization for change.

"ACRT is evolving and we've committed to growth. I value our culture and wish to preserve that which is good as we prepare our organization for transformation. ACRT has an incredible level of passion for its business and I want to work hard to establish credibility and add value to the organization."

## Tour des Trees

*Over \$365,000 Raised for the TREE Fund*

ACRT Business Development Manager Kevin Jones recently completed the 2010 STIHL Tour des Trees—America's largest fundraiser for the TREE Fund.



*KJ gearing up for his ride on the Tour des Trees.*

"I had a great time," Jones said. "I was able to gain an insight into other areas of the industry."

Jones used a fundraising page and blog to highlight the event and created a short film called *The Commuter*, which covered his training and fundraising efforts.

## ACRT Safety Progress Report

*Reducing Risk to Keep You Safe*

Last month, ACRT's senior management discussed safety concerns and identified future areas of improvement. One area that showed particular improvement was the downward trend of the company's medically treated incidents (MTIs), as shown in the chart to the right.

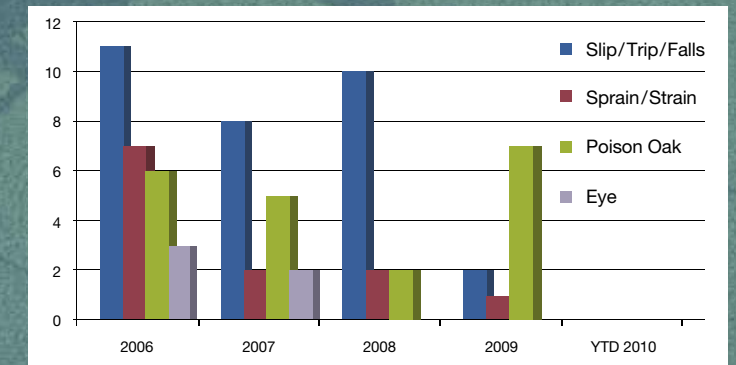
At ACRT, all incidents are classified into root cause categories. Based on a review of all categories, the four most common and costly incidents were also those showing the greatest improvement over the last five years—with 2010 having zero reported incidents.

ACRT continues to focus its attention on reducing or eliminating incidents of all causes through safer work practices, better equipment and empowering employees to promote a safer work environment.

### Training Classes:

- October 18–22
- Line Clearance Arborist Certification: October 25–29

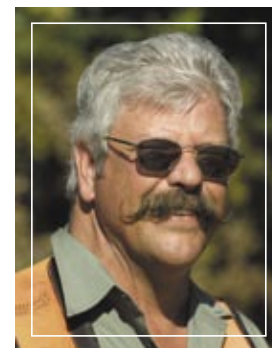
Contact Lois Tennant at [loist@acrtinc.com](mailto:loist@acrtinc.com) or (800) 622-2562, ext. 240 to sign up.



*The Safety Progress Report shows a continual reduction of medically treated incidents.*

## A Fresh Face Out West

*William E. Litel Promoted to Western Region's Business Development Manager*



ACRT has added William E. Litel to its Western Region sales team in the position of Business Development Manager. Since 2004, Litel has served ACRT as a Senior Consulting Utility Forester and worked on ACRT's Ready Force™ immediate response team.

"Bill brings a wealth of sales experience to his new role, as well as practical field-level service in UVM," said Joe Marshall, Sales Manager for ACRT. "He will be an immediate asset to both our sales team and most importantly, our customers. His knowledge and expertise will add considerable value for the utility customers we serve."

Litel's new responsibilities include managing prospective and current customer accounts in the Western United States. With more than 20 years of related industry experience, qualifications as both an ISA Certified Arborist and California Certified Nursery Professional with plant identification and arboriculture specializations, Litel's understanding and capabilities will bolster growth and invigorate customer relationships.

"I look forward to assisting the sales team in our goal to expand ACRT's presence throughout our Western Region," Litel said.

### Safety Tip: Check Your Job Site!

Before beginning the workday, check the job site—can traction tape or mats be used? Is there an overgrowth of poison ivy, oak, or sumac?

