

What To Do When Storms Damage Trees

Recent series of tornadoes and high winds have left many property owners facing the task of cutting and clearing trees and dodging downed power lines. Storm clean up when tree removal and other jobs are most difficult is traditionally when many property owners crank up their first chain saw. And, not surprisingly, they injure themselves. It is also the time when “ambulance chasing” tree care operators arrive in town looking for work. Some of these people work only when storms hit certain cities and charge exorbitant amounts for their work. This is not a professional practice.

The National Arborist Association, the trade organization for owners and operators of tree care businesses, offer these safety tips to help avoid personal injury or damage to property during storm clean-up, and to protect yourself from unethical tree care operators. Keep this list handy for emergencies.

Hire a Tree Care Professional.

The best advice is to hire a tree care professional with the experience, expertise and equipment to safely take down or prune damage trees. Require proof of liability insurance and check to see if your own insurance company covers the cost of the work.

If a utility line is down:

Assume any downed line is energized.

Don't touch a tree or anything touching the downed line. Make sure that nobody else, including children and pets, goes near it. Contact with energized lines can result in fatal electrocution.

When a tree falls:

Carefully inspect the tree and the surrounding area from a distance for anything – utility lines, property, vehicles, etc. – that the tree might have hit or interfered with when it fell.

Call 911 if the tree has injured anyone.

Caution: small trees, bent under tension, can be extremely hazardous, do not go near them.

Call your utility company if the tree might have damaged utility wires.

Rope off or otherwise block access to the fallen tree until it can be removed.

Do not use a chain saw for tree removal unless you have years of experience in handling one. Tree removals even when the tree has already fallen, are very unpredictable – don't take unnecessary chances.

Remember, a tree is a living thing, and its integrity and stability changes over time, so don't assume that if a tree has survived 10 severe storms it will necessarily survive another. Have a professional arborist evaluate the trees you own. Doing this will help you determine potential weaknesses and dangers. Ask the arborist to look for signs of potential hazards, such as stress cracks, weak branches and other subtle indicators of potential hazards. Check the tree for dead or partially attached limbs hung up in higher branches that could fall and cause damage or injury during a storm. Contact the licensed tree experts at Pardoe's Lawn and Tree Service at 800-427-4890.

