



established 1938

National Arborist Association

Dedicated to the Advancement of Commercial Tree Care Businesses

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For immediate release

After Storms, Downed Trees Are Dangerous

Winter storm season is upon us again, and that spells danger to our urban forest. High winds, ice and snow put tremendous pressures on trees growing near houses or power lines. In their wake, property owners face the task of clearing trees and downed limbs.

“Storm cleanup is often when many property owners crank up their first chain saw,” notes Robert Rouse, staff arborist for the National Arborist Association. “And, not surprisingly, they injure themselves. It is also the time when ‘ambulance chasing’ tree care operators arrive in town looking for work. Some charge exorbitant amounts for their work.”

The National Arborist Association, the trade organization for owners and operators of tree care businesses, offers these safety tips to help avoid personal injury or damage to property during storm clean-up, and to ensure that you hire an ethical tree service professional.

For those homeowners who do attempt this work—which is not recommended—here’s a primer on safe tree and brush removal.

If a utility line is down:

- Call the utility company immediately.
- 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 electrocution.

When removing a tree:

- Note the location of other people in the area and plan an escape route from the falling tree before cutting.
- Carefully inspect the tree and the surrounding area for anything—utility lines, property, vehicles, etc.—that might get hit or interfere with the tree felling or removal.
- Examine the shape and lean of the tree. Inspect the trunk for decay, weak spots or hanging limbs, and for any metal or concrete in or around the tree. If so, the tree is unstable, take extra precaution while removing that tree.
- Even small trees bent under tension can be extremely hazardous.

Do not use a chain saw for tree removal unless you have years of experience handling one. Even professional tree care personnel face risk of injury using chain saws. Tree removals are very unpredictable—don’t take unnecessary chances!

What can you do? 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 damaged trees. Require proof of liability insurance and check to see if the cost of the work is covered by your insurance company.

Home Owner *TIP* of the Month

Assessing storm damage to your trees? Here are some simple do’s and don’ts:

- DO: Call utility company immediately if a line is down.
- DON’T: Touch anything near a downed powerline.
- DO: Carefully inspect the area around a fallen tree.
- DON’T: Fire up the chain saw to remove a fallen tree.
- DO: Find a qualified arborist to take care of major tree hazards following storms.

Home owners looking for an arborist in their area can contact the National Arborist Association (NAA), a public and professional resource on trees and arboriculture. The NAA has more than 2,800 company-owning members who recognize stringent safety and performance standards, and are required to carry liability insurance. Find a tree care service provider in your area by calling 1-800-733-2622 or by doing a zip code search at the NAA’s Web site, www.natlarb.com.

For photos to accompany this press release, contact Mark Garvin at 1-800-733-2622, Ext. 108, or e-mail Garvin@natlarb.com

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