

## **MANAGING STORM-DAMAGED TREES:** Steps for taking care of your trees after a major storm:

### **STEP 1: Be SAFE**

It is crucial to work with the local authorities immediately after a major storm. Do not take any action that could interfere with rescue operations or put yourself in danger. Be cautious not to touch trees that are in contact with power lines and **never** prune trees close to power lines.

### **STEP 2: Don't PANIC**

Once power has been restored after a storm and cleanup has been initiated, you can begin to assess damage to their trees.

First determine if the trees in question are on your property. If the tree is in the public right-of-way, contact your local city office to see who is responsible for managing trees in these locations.

If your tree is immediately adjacent to power lines, contact your local utility for potential assistance with pruning broken branches or removal of the tree. **DO NOT** prune around utility lines; this work should be done by trained professionals.

### **STEP 3: Get CERTIFIED, INSURED, PROFESSIONAL HELP**

Identification and elimination of immediate threats to public safety is a priority after the power is back on and cleanup is under way. Identify trees that are 1) uprooted, 2) split in half, or 3) undermined, and select them for removal. Be aware of potential targets such as buildings, sidewalks, electric wires, and roads.

The good news is that there is no need as a homeowner to pay a premium for services in the first few weeks after the storm. If the majority of broken branches or stubs are less than 2 inches in diameter, then tree trimming doesn't have to be done immediately (unless life or property are threatened).

#### **When hiring a professional tree service/arborist, consider the following:**

- 1) Avoid folks knocking on doors offering to work on trees. Most local, qualified companies do not create business this way.
- 2) Ask for proof of personal and property damage insurance, and workers compensation.
- 3) Ask for references from local clients.
- 4) Ask what they do to prevent the spread of oak wilt.\*
- 5) Consider contacting the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) to determine if they are a certified arborist.
- 6) Obtain written estimates listing all the work to be done from multiple companies.
- 7) Do not pay for work until it is complete.
- 8) Be patient! After a storm most local companies are very busy, and it could take weeks or even a few months before they can complete the necessary work on your tree.

\*Oak wilt is a deadly fungal disease that kills oak trees and can spread to fresh wounds on oak trees, including pruning cuts. Whomever you hire should have at least a basic understanding of oak wilt and have a plan to decrease their risk of spreading it.

Often after major storms anyone with a chain saw and truck will begin working in an area. This often leads to undesirable pruning practices such as topping. Topping is an undesirable practice that basically consists of removing large major branches leaving multiple stubs. This practice promotes decay, undesirable branching characteristics, and more than likely will kill the tree. Tree services promoting topping should not be hired.

### **STEP 4 REPLANT**

If you or someone you know has lost a tree in a storm or have a tree which has been damaged to the point that it needs to be removed, the final step is to replace your lost tree with a new one.

For more information on managing storm damaged trees, pruning practices, tree planting and a list of recommend trees for our area go to the Texas Trees Foundation [www.texastrees.org](http://www.texastrees.org) or call us at 214-953-1184.