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ARKANSAS FORESTRY COMMISSION PROVIDES TREE CARE TIPS FOLLOWING STORMS

STATEWIDE, ARK. – Following a stormy series of days for most Arkansas residents, it's important that homeowners be informed about tree care after damaging wind and rain. Trees impacted by storms should be carefully assessed to ensure the safety of residents and property, and to maintain optimal health for damaged trees.

Safety First

- If damaged trees are entangled in overhead or downed utility lines, do not touch the limbs or lines. Treat all lines as if they were live. Alert your electricity provider.
- Carefully inspect for broken or hanging branches near tree tops. Hanging limbs that could drop on your family, home, cars, or other valuable property should be removed safely and as quickly as possible. Any remaining tree damage can wait until the immediate emergency has passed.
 - You might check your homeowner policy before beginning any tree work. Some policies cover tree damage if structural repairs are needed.
- If you use equipment including chain saws to remove limbs, take all safety precautions including the use of full personal protective equipment – especially hard hats, eye protection, leather gloves, and close-toed shoes.
- Trees may look unbalanced due to missing branches, but if they are healthy and at least half of the branches are intact, the tree has a good chance for a full recovery. Take your time on assessing which trees to remove completely.

Determine – can the tree be saved?

- In most cases, if more than 50% of a tree's top remains intact, the tree can recover from damages.
- Make sure that after removing damaged limbs, the tree will still provide aesthetic value to the property. If not, you may consider replacing the tree.

Assess the Damage

- When the damage is limited to a few small branches, light pruning is usually all that is needed.
 - Make sure pruning tools are sharpened. Dull edges can cause further damage to the tree.

- Remove loose or loosely attached branches to avoid further injury and decay to the tree.
- Branches that have pulled away from the trunk should be removed at the bottom of the rip.
- When pruning, cut branches on the branch side of the tree to avoid further damage to the tree trunk.
- Never “top” the tree, which means – you should never simply cut the entire top of the tree off. This weakens the tree and makes it more susceptible to further injury and disease over time.
- For larger branches, a certified arborist with the equipment and knowledge should be hired to ensure the work is done safely and properly.

When do you remove the tree completely?

- If the trunk is split, the tree will need to be removed.
- If more than 50% of the tree’s top is damaged, the tree will most likely need to be removed.
- If the tree has been damaged several times previously, remember that it may also become a greater hazard over time. Carefully assess trees with previous injury or disease for possible removal.
- Finally, a leaning tree from root damage will usually not survive, the tree will need to be removed.
- Arkansas Forestry Commission personnel can assist you with assessing tree health. Visit forestry.arkansas.gov and choose “Contact Us,” to find local experts near you.

Selecting an Arborist or Forestry Professional

- Arborists are professionals who have made a career out of tree care.
- When working with arborists or forestry professionals, request proof of certification and/or of membership in professional organizations. A qualified arborist should be an ISA-Certified Arborist (certified through the International Society of Arboriculture).
- When working with arborists or forestry professionals, request proof of worker’s compensation and liability insurance.
- Check references for any professionals you hire to assist you with clearing damaged trees.
- Get multiple estimates for the work you need done, in every circumstance.
- Visit www.treesaregood.org to find a certified arborist near you.

The mission of the AFC is to protect Arkansas’s forests, and those who enjoy them, from wildland fire and natural hazards while promoting rural and urban forest health, stewardship, development, and conservation for all generations of Arkansans. To report a wildfire, or inquire about wildfire danger, call the AFC Dispatch Center at 1-800-468-8834. To report an emergency, dial 911. Stay updated on Arkansas forest health, forest management assistance, AFC updates and warnings, and more at www.forestry.arkansas.gov.

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