

For Immediate Release

Safety and caution stressed for tree debris clean-up following violent Midwest storms

CHAMPAIGN, IL (November 2013) – The tornadoes that swept through central and north central Illinois this past weekend left a trail of destruction, leveling homes and businesses and delivering powerful wind gusts that severely damaged and knocked down numerous trees across the state. If left unaddressed, these harmed trees will remain vulnerable to the whims of additional severe weather and could cause future damage to both people and property.

While those in affected areas can administer some first aid to help trees recover, The International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) recommends a qualified professional be consulted for instances requiring immediate removal or trimming. ISA encourages the following in the aftermath of destructive storms:

Assess tree damage – Evaluate trees carefully and safely by looking up, down and all around.

- Be sure to stay clear of downed utility lines and any hanging branches that look like they are ready to fall.
- Other than the storm damage, check to see if trees are basically healthy and vigorous and whether any major limbs or leader branches (the main upward-trending branch on most trees) remain on the tree.
- Examine the tree's crown to determine if at least half of the branches and leaves are still intact and whether any remaining branches can form new ones.
- Trees after a storm may look unbalanced with branches missing, but if they pass this initial inspection, there is a good chance for complete recovery.

Tree debris removal – Only after appropriate assessment, begin by clearing away broken branches or stubs still attached to the tree.

- Remove the jagged remains of smaller-sized broken limbs to minimize the risk of decay. Smaller branches should be pruned at the point where they join larger ones on the tree.
- For larger branches that are broken, a professional arborist who has the necessary equipment and knowledge needed to do the job safely should cut them back to the trunk or a main limb.

Do not over-prune or top trees – Resist the urge to cut back all of the branches because it will not prevent breakage in future storms.

- According to ISA Certified Arborists, “topping,” which is the cutting of main branches back to stubs, is extremely harmful and unhealthy for your trees. Stubs will often grow back, but will produce weaker branches that are more likely to break during a storm.
- Topping will also reduce the amount of tree foliage and they depend on that for food and nourishment needed for re-growth.
- A topped tree that has already sustained major storm damage is more likely to die than repair itself.

Hire a professional – Serious injuries can happen during tree debris removal. If large limbs are broken or hanging, or if ladder or overhead chain saw work is needed, an ISA Certified Arborist should be consulted immediately.

- Trees damaged by strong winds may have sustained cracks or developed weak attachments that could break in the next storm. Qualified arborists can assess trees to determine the likelihood of failure in the future.
- Some arborists have special training in tree risk assessment and can take a critical look at trees to ensure that any risk is minimal.

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What to look for when choosing an arborist –When selecting a reputable tree care company, consider the following:

- Check for certification – Does the arborist have an ISA certification? Look for credentials such as Certified Tree Worker/Climber Specialist or Board Certified Master Arborist. Certification means arborists are up-to-date on the latest technology and follow acceptable industry practices.
- Is the arborist licensed? – Some states require licensing for tree care companies so check requirements to make sure companies under consideration are in compliance. Keep in mind that dishonest tree companies often follow storms to make a quick buck and then leave town. If an arborist is from out of state and offering services, make sure they are credentialed through ISA.
- Ask for proof of insurance, references and an estimate – Verify that an arborist has coverage with an insurance company. A reputable tree care worker should be able to cover personal and property damage as well as worker's compensation. Check references and if possible, visit locations where the company has done tree care work. Never be afraid to ask for an estimate and get it in writing. Do not immediately accept the lowest bid. Look at all specifications and credentials to determine which company will provide the best service available to protect your investment.

With more than 20,000 members worldwide and located in nearly every U.S. metropolitan area, ISA can guide consumers and offer valuable perspective on choosing a reputable tree care company. For more on how to find a local ISA Certified Arborist, visit www.treesaregood.org.

About ISA

The International Society of Arboriculture (ISA), headquartered in Champaign, Ill., U.S., is a nonprofit organization supporting tree care research and education around the world. To promote the importance of arboriculture, ISA manages the consumer education web site, www.treesaregood.org, which fulfills the association's mission to help educate the public about the importance and value of proper tree care. Also, as part of ISA's dedication to the care and preservation of shade and ornamental trees, it offers the only internationally-recognized certification program in the industry. For more information on ISA and Certified Arborists, visit www.isa-arbor.com.



International Society of Arboriculture

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