

# After the Hurricane: Dealing with Damaged Trees

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**H**urricanes bring winds that can exceed 125 miles per hour, heavy rain, and flooding — any or all of which can damage trees. Some damage can be seen immediately, while some damage may not become apparent for years after a hurricane.

On the other hand, what may initially seem like mortal damage — all the leaves blown off, for example — may be just temporary. Leaves saturated with saltwater turn brown and look like they've been burned. If not hazardous, these trees should be monitored for 6 to 12 months before deciding to cut them.

Downed or weakened trees can be hazardous to people, buildings, and power lines. Storm-damaged trees should be assessed for risk as soon as possible after a hurricane or other major storm. Signs that a tree could be a hazard include:

New cracks in the lower trunk or large stems split from the tree;

- Major roots severed or broken;
- Tree partially uprooted;
- Noticeable tree lean in response to the storm;
- Large limbs broken; and
- Most of crown damaged.

If one or more of these conditions are present, consult with a professional arborist as soon as possible. Until the tree damage is addressed, stay clear and keep vehicles and other movable assets out of range.

## Some Tips When Hiring a Tree Service

- ◆ Beware of scams — unsolicited offers, bargain deals, and out-of-state companies with offers too good to be true. Use a qualified arborist; unqualified workers could get hurt on your property or cause irreparable damage to trees.
- ◆ Ask for certificates and proof of liability insurance and workers' compensation. Contact the insurance company to confirm that policies are current.
- ◆ Ask for references and check them.
- ◆ Do not use any company that recommends topping.
- ◆ Sign a written agreement before the work. Never pay in advance.
- ◆ Landowners with larger stands of trees will need to develop a plan for salvaging damaged timber. 🌲

*Adapted from: Mississippi homeowners guide: working with trees affected by Hurricane Katrina. [Available from Mississippi Forestry Commission \(MFC\).](#)*

