

Cleaning Up After a Hurricane

Safety Comes First!

Most injuries and deaths in a natural disaster occur during cleanup. Safety must be the first concern.

General safety tips

- Do not work alone.
- Keep a well stocked first-aid kit nearby and learn how to use it.
- Avoid overexertion – this is the most common cause for injury. Avoid lifting over 50 pounds. Remember to lift with the legs and not the back.



Appoint a flagger or use barricades and warning signs to control traffic or onlookers.

Chain saw safety

Chain saws are considered the most dangerous hand tool available. The risk of injury increases during hurricane cleanup when chain saws are widely used to remove trees and branches. Use these guidelines to avoid injuries:



Cut at waist level or below.

- **Follow manual instructions** carefully to ensure safe operation and proper equipment maintenance.
- **Wear the appropriate personal protective equipment.**
- **Keep both hands on the handles.** Many chain saw injuries affect the hands and are the result of using the saw with just one hand.
- **Cut at waist level or below.** Chain saw injuries to the head often result from making overhead cuts.
- **Take extra care when cutting limbs that are bent, twisted, or caught under another object.** They may snap back and hit you or pinch the saw.
- **Take the time to do the job right.** Most injuries affect the legs and feet and are the result of aggressive or careless cutting. Take breaks when needed, because most injuries occur when workers are fatigued.
- **Shut off equipment** when fueling the saw or carrying it a distance of more than 100 feet, or through slippery areas or heavy brush.
- **Be sure the chain saw operator is aware of your presence before you approach.** Chain saw operators often cannot see or hear the approach of other people.
- **Do not cut with the upper tip of the chain saw to avoid kickback.**



Do not cut with the upper tip!

Kickback occurs when the upper tip of the guide bar contacts an object and causes the saw to come straight back at the operator. Kickback happens so fast that there is no time for reaction.

How to prevent: Cut with the part of the bar closest to the engine. Watch where the tip is at all times – do not let it contact the ground or other branches.

Create a safe work zone

- Survey the site to identify potential hazards and discuss where there is potential for injuries. Agree on communication signals before you start to work.
- Set a perimeter around the work area that is two times the height of the tree. More distance is required when felling trees or dropping limbs.
- Mark the area with tape or cones and keep non-workers safely outside this area.

Personal Protective

Equipment: reduces the likelihood of injury by covering key areas of the body.

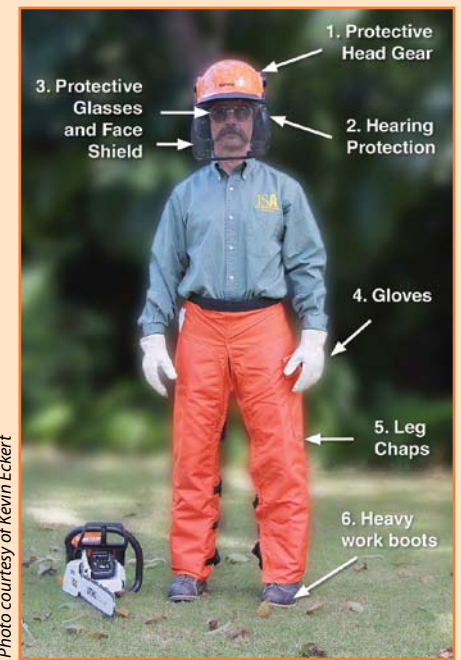


Photo courtesy of Kevin Eckert

Storm damage cleanup is extremely dangerous, even for professionals!

More safety information is available at the Florida AgSafe web site www.flagsafe.ufl.edu

Get the Right Tree Care Professional

What Situations Require a Professional?

Homeowner: If you use a chain saw, work only on the ground. Get a professional for all other situations. Do not use ladders or ropes.

Professional: Tree care professionals with adequate equipment and insurance can handle these situations.

- Taking trees down in open areas.
- Removing dead or hazardous limbs.

Certified arborist: These situations require advanced training and are best handled by ISA certified arborists.

- Removing a leaning tree or broken limb that is near a house or other potential target.
- Reaching limbs that require climbing.
- Restoring a damaged tree that could be saved.
- Pruning to promote good structure.



Electrical hazards

Trees can uproot underground utilities and tear down power lines during hurricanes. The combination of electrical wires and flooding creates a hazardous environment that requires extreme caution. Only qualified line-clearance arborists should work near electrical utilities.



- Call the power company to report tree limbs that have fallen on a power line.
- Assume all power lines are energized and do not touch. Improper use of generators may energize lines without warning.
- Beware! Electrocutation may occur if any part of your body touches a conductor (water, tool, tree branch, metal fence, etc.) in contact with an energized power line.

Hiring an Arborist

Hiring an arborist is a worthwhile investment. Trees increase property value when they are well maintained but can be a liability if poorly pruned or unhealthy.

Beware of scams! Unqualified individuals wanting to make a quick dollar may bring chain saws and equipment to help clean up after the storm. However, qualified arborists from around the country also come to help. Learn to identify the qualified arborists because unqualified workers may get hurt or cause irreparable damage to trees.

Use these questions to help you find a qualified arborist:



Insurance:

Are you insured for property damage, personal liability, and worker's compensation?

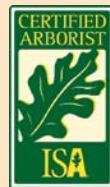
If you hire an uninsured company, you may be held responsible for medical bills and lost wages for injured workers.

Professionalism:

Are you certified by the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA)?

Being certified requires professional experience and knowledge of the best techniques in the industry. Arborists attend training courses and continuing education classes to learn the latest research.

To find an ISA certified arborist in your area, contact:



International Society of Arboriculture (ISA)

<http://www.isa-arbor.com>
(217) 355-9411 or (888) 472-8733

Florida Chapter - ISA

<http://www.floridaisa.org>
(941) 342-0153

Florida Cooperative Extension Service County Office
Florida Division of Forestry County Office

What are the ANSI Z133.1 and ANSI A300 guidelines?

The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) prints these two guidelines, with which all tree care professionals should be familiar. ANSI Z133.1 represents safety standards for tree care operations in the United States. ANSI A300 represents the best management practices in the industry for pruning and other tree care operations.

Estimates:

What are the procedures involved, equipment used, price, and time frame?

Get more than one written estimate. Keep in mind that specialized equipment, qualified skills, and insurance will cost more. Good tree work is worth the additional investment; poor work may cost more in the long run.