

## Tree Removal Following a Storm

Following a storm, such as a tornado or ice storm, cutting and removing trees is complicated by tangled trees, twisted limbs and other snarled obstacles. Normally, experienced loggers avoid trees that are twisted, pre-loaded or fallen and tangled together. After a tornado, trees and limbs may be so matted together that clearing with chain saws becomes dangerous work. Experienced chain saw operators have developed approaches to minimize binding of limbs on the saw and to avoid getting pinned by falling trees. Caution and experience are essential because entangled limbs and trees do not react as they would if they were cut separately.

Many times trees with full foliage are warped causing unusual forces or weight distributions. Proper limbing varies from the normal cutting situation. Often, this will cause more saw kickback and pinching of the saw.

Before approaching a downed tree, check for any power lines or other hazards that may be present. Continue to be alert for overhead hazards, debris that could be dislodged as you work or trees lodging against the tree you are cutting.

Do not try to remove a tree that is leaning on or applying force onto a structure without having the structure inspected.

Begin limbing at the outer edges of the tree limbs. Always clear an area for your work as you advance. The first limbs to be cut are those on the top of the trunk. Cut these limbs as far toward the top of the tree as possible before removing the remaining limbs that are resting on the ground.

Do not make cuts above chest high with a chain saw. It's dangerous because it is easy to lose your balance and the result could be fatal.

Stand on the opposite side of the trunk from the limb being cut. The trunk provides a barrier between you and the saw and helps protect you from accidental contact with the chain.

When removing trees and residue after a storm (or disaster), keep in mind that your main objectives are to safely remove obstacles that may pose a hazard to individuals or structures and to clear a path for services to be resumed.

When cutting trees after a storm, remember that you are not cutting firewood. The proper cut log length is determined by the weight that one person can handle. The length of limbs should not be so large as to hamper the removal of the brush pile by large equipment.

Bucking, cutting the log into sections, differs depending on how the log is supported. When a log lays flat on the ground, cut down from the top surface, then roll it over and finish the cut from the opposite side. When a log is supported on one end, cut one-third of the diameter from the underside to avoid pinching and splintering. Then cut through the remaining two-thirds of the diameter from the top. If a log is supported at both ends, make the first cut through the top one-third of the diameter. The remaining limb, tree trunk or log is then cut upward from the bottom.

Cutting branches resting on the ground may be necessary to clear the area as you work. Beware that the tree may sag or roll as a new branch is cut. The likelihood of the tree rolling increases as more branches are removed. Be alert for any trunk movement and be ready to move away quickly if necessary.

Do not hold a powered saw with one hand and clear limbs with the other hand. Shut off the chain saw and put it down until limbs have been cleared.

Limbs and brush are normally piled along roads following a storm. Service crews can load and dispose of debris later. Do not locate piles under utility lines or other places that will be dangerous or hard to reach with large loaders and other equipment.

Pay attention to what is going on around you at all times. Do not work as large groups in a manner that individuals interfere with each other or there is only one task. Normally, grouping four to six people for cutting and moving logs provides good teamwork to safely handle most projects without bumping into each other.

Take frequent breaks and drink plenty of water. Each person in a group should take turns taking breaks and supervising the safety of the other individuals. Using good judgment is essential for staying safe and doing a good job.