



Did a Storm Damage Your Tree?

On the evening of July 3rd, parts of Arlington County and Fairfax County were hit by a microburst with 70 mile an hour winds that resulted in damages to homes, cars, people, and their trees.

Storms cause tremendous stress and severe damage to trees in the urban forest. Obviously, a snapped or downed tree should be removed. What about a tree that suffers minor damage? How can a homeowner tell if a tree is safe?

Assessing the damage

Minor damage - with only the smallest branches of the tree being injured - usually results in little or no permanent injury to the tree. All that is required is cleanup of the broken twigs and branches and perhaps a crown cleaning to restore a pleasing shape.

More severe damage - large broken branches, split crotches, removal of bark and splitting or splintering of the trunk - can be caused by strong winds and heavy ice storms. When a tree is severely damaged, the first question that must be answered is: "Is the condition of the tree such that keeping it is worthwhile?" A tree care professional should be consulted to answer this question.



"Most arborists will take the time and effort to save a tree only if the tree will still be healthy, attractive and of value to the property owner after repairs," explains Andy Ross, Certified Arborist of RTEC Treecare. "A tree care expert may recommend removal of a tree that has brittle wood and a branch structure that makes it vulnerable to additional damage from future storms.

"Trees that have been topped by storms can be prime candidates for removal" says Ross.

Other factors to consider when determining if a tree is worth saving:

- Species - Is this type of tree prone to pests and other problems?
- Age - Is the tree mature or over-mature?
- Vigor - What health condition was the tree in before the damage?
- Value it adds to the property - Does the tree still have value, even if partially damaged?

- Sentimental value - Is the tree a living monument?

If a tree is not worth saving, remove it as soon as possible. If it is not removed and the tree dies, it could become a hazard tree. Removal of hazard trees is dangerous to the tree care crew and requires special techniques, adding to the cost.

Treating the tree

Assuming the decision has been made to repair the tree, the next question is: "Am I capable of repairing the damage myself or should I seek professional help?" Major repair will undoubtedly require the use of a chain saw and climbing equipment. Unless one is experienced in the use of such equipment and comfortable working off the ground, it would be best to have the work performed by a competent professional. Inspect your trees for damage after a storm. If a tree has hazards, such as broken, hanging limbs or a split branch union (sometimes called a branch fork), you should have a reputable tree care company give an assessment. This is important because you could be held liable if the hazard branch or tree falls and damages property or causes personal injury.

What should you do?

Homeowners who would like a professional Arborist to assess their trees should contact RTEC Treecare, we are an Accredited Tree Care company by the Tree Care Industry Association (TCIA). The TCIA has the nation's only Accreditation program that ensures that tree care companies has been inspected and accredited based on: adherence to industry standards for quality and safety; maintenance of trained, professional staff; and dedication to ethics and quality in business practices.

Call or [e-mail](#) today to schedule your consultation with our Certified Arborists.



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