

INSIDE GRUNDY COUNTY
By Bill Arndorfer
Grundy County Extension Education Director
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The ice and snow storm that went through the county and surrounding area over the weekend left quite a bit of tree damage in its wake. This column will review tips to follow when dealing with storm damaged trees.

First, remove hazards that present danger to people and property. It may be best to hire a tree care specialist to remove damaged trees. After hazards are eliminated and debris on the ground has been cleaned up, assess individual trees to determine if further treatment is required. The effect of storm damage on the survival, longevity, appearance and function of each tree must be judged. This impact assessment is not an easy task; in many cases, it simply will be a judgment call. However, the safety and protection of people and property should be the most important consideration.

Severe splitting of the main trunk or any type of injury that result in removal of more than one third of the bark around the circumference of the main trunk usually places the tree in severe jeopardy and may make removal necessary. Larger trees that have had their tops broken are also poor risks. Broken side branches or minor trunk or top injuries do not typically put the tree at risk.

Also, carefully inspect the tree for hidden damage. Identify cracks in the trunk or in large limbs. To reduce safety hazards, it is important to find hidden damage before repair work begins. Any type of major injury may reduce the useful life of a tree. Wounding can provide an entrance point for decay fungi or insects. The decision to retain or remove storm damaged trees depends on the individual situation and no specific guidelines can be proposed.

Depending on the damage to the tree, you will need to decide if you can do the work yourself or if you will need to hire a professional tree care specialist. The choice may depend on the type and extent of damage. Much of the repair work involved with treating storm damaged trees is pruning.

Do not make the wound any larger than necessary. Storm breakage of limbs often leaves large, uneven stubs. The goal is to make the wound as small as possible to encourage prompt wound closure. Use the right technique and avoid flush cutting. For tips on the proper method for pruning, refer to publication SUL-5, Pruning Trees and Shrubs at www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/SUL5.pdf.

Trees and other woody plants have a natural defense system that will begin to close the wounds with new woody tissue. Because woody plants can seal or close wounds themselves, the use of wound dressings or pruning paint is no longer recommended.

For more detailed information, check out publication SUL6, Managing Storm Damaged Trees at www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/SUL6.pdf or contact the Grundy Office of ISU Extension at 319-824-6979 to request either publication.