

# Risk Alert



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## Prepare trees to endure high winds

The destructive force of wind can cause enormous damage to trees. Everyone has seen photographs of areas hit by a hurricane or tornado. Large areas are littered with uprooted trees and broken branches. However, it does not take a storm of great magnitude to cause tree damage.

Consider that a mature tree can weigh more than 40,000 pounds, and the failure of just one of these trees can cause immense structural damage to your facility.



The well-being of your facility and congregation depends on the steps you have taken well before the first signs of an approaching windstorm. If not addressed, high winds can exploit weak spots on your trees—forked branches, diseased wood, previous injury and damaged or weak roots.

You can enhance the wind resistance of a tree with routine maintenance to thin out dense crowns and dead wood. This type of maintenance should be performed by a professional tree care service. They can assist you in removing diseased and damaged limbs and strategically remove branches to allow wind to flow through the tree.

## Examine trees that grow close to buildings

Trees growing close to a building are those most likely to fall directly onto a building. Buildings should be kept free from overhanging branches and trees. Overhanging branches can cause damage to siding and roofs from continuous scraping. Large pockets of branches also can withhold proper drainage.

## Consider removing over mature trees

Older trees are more likely to fail. As trees grow and age, they become more susceptible to insects, diseases and wind. Branches that die become less flexible and are more vulnerable to break during a strong wind. The larger and older a tree is, the more branches it will lose from wind. Remove hazardous trees before the wind does.

## Damaged root systems make trees susceptible to the wind

Roots anchor the tree. A poor root system creates a weak tree. Tree roots need to extend out from a tree in all directions in order to stabilize it. When roots under the canopy are cut, trees are more prone to topple from wind. Be careful not to damage or cut main support roots during a construction project.

(Over)

Take steps to reduce the risk of loss from trees with routine maintenance and identification and treatment of preexisting symptoms. When a tree fails, plant a new tree in its place.

For more information on tree pruning, visit the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service's Web site for a free booklet.

**For a complete collection of the *Risk Alert* series, visit our Web site and look in the Safety Resources section.**