



How to Hire a Tree Service

When confronted with storm-damaged trees on your home or property, your initial reaction might be to find someone – anyone – who can deal with the problem immediately, or you may attempt to tackle the job yourself. While these are natural reactions, they can lead to poor hiring decisions. Many companies and individuals are inexperienced and ill-prepared for this specialized job. “Do-it-yourselfers” often end up with serious injuries. Work by inexperienced people can also lead to needless additional property damage and significant liability. Many of these problems can be avoided by following a few simple guidelines:

Do not do anything, outside of providing for personal safety, until you contact your insurance company. Your provider may require the use of specific contractors and have certain procedures you must follow to receive full coverage.

Be very wary of hiring anyone walking the neighborhood and knocking on doors. Don’t be bullied into having work done through fear or intimidation. This is not a tactic used by professional tree workers. Should you feel threatened by these individuals, call your local police.

Have a clear mind and record in writing what you want the job to look like when it is finished, particularly with regard to clean up. Be specific about who is responsible for:

- Possible further damage to lawn, shrubs and landscaping, structures, adjacent and previously undamaged trees, fences, driveways, patios, and sidewalks.
- Chip-spreading or removal and debris handling. Don’t allow pine chips to remain on site - they could attract pine beetles.

Secure as many bids as possible – at least three, looking for those who specialize in storm damage (if that’s an issue), and making sure the requirements of the job and responsibility for any additional damage are understood. Check at least three references. Be wary of out of state contractors.

Get written estimates. Ensure that estimates include credentials, written scope of work to be performed and all costs. Compare quotes on the basis of services to be performed and costs for each service.

Ask for proof of workers' compensation and personal and property damage insurance. Always contact the contractor's insurance company. Make sure a policy is valid when the contractor shows up on the job.

Never pay any money until the job is completely finished and you are satisfied.

Require a written contract. NO EXCEPTIONS! Read contracts carefully before signing. Place any additional requirements in the written contract and verify that the contract details when work will be started and completed. Demand that work may begin only after a contract is signed by both parties.