

RECOGNIZING TREE HAZARDS

Trees provide significant benefits to our homes and cities, but when trees fall and injure people or damage property, they are liabilities. Taking care of potential tree hazards makes your property safer and may prolong the lives of your trees.

Hazardous Trees & Utility Lines

Trees that fall into utility lines have additional serious consequences.

Damaged lines may cause power outages, surges and fire. Downed lines still conducting electricity are especially dangerous. A tree with the potential to fall into a utility line is a very serious situation. Keep in mind that every tree has the potential to fail, but only a small number actually do.

Tree Hazard Checklist

Consider these questions:

- ~ Are there large dead branches in the tree?
- ~ Are there detached branches hanging in the tree?
- ~ Does the tree have cavities or rotten wood along the trunk or in major branches?
- ~ Are mushrooms present at the base of the tree?
- ~ Are there cracks or splits in the trunk or where branches are attached?
- ~ Have any branches fallen from the tree?
- ~ Have adjacent trees fallen over or died?
- ~ Has the trunk recently developed a lean?
- ~ Do many of the major branches arise from one point on the trunk?
- ~ Have the roots been broken off, injured or damaged by lowering the soil level, installing pavement, repairing sidewalks or digging trenches?
- ~ Has the site recently been changed by construction, raising the soil level or installing lawns?
- ~ Have the leaves prematurely developed an unusual color or size?
- ~ Have trees in adjacent wooded areas been removed?
- ~ Has the tree been topped or otherwise heavily/poorly pruned?

Managing Tree Hazards

Reducing the risk associated with hazardous trees can take many forms. BTS arborists are familiar with evaluation and may suggest one or more of the following:

- ~ **Remove the target.** While you can't move your home or a power line, you can move picnic tables, cars and landscape features to prevent them from being hit by an ailing tree.
- ~ **Prune the tree.** Remove the defective branches of the tree. Since inappropriate pruning may also weaken a tree, it is best done by contacting BTS.
- ~ **Cable and brace the tree.** Provide physical support for weak branches and stems to increase their strength and stability.
- ~ **Provide routine care.** Mature trees need routine care in the form of water, fertilizer (in some cases), mulch and pruning as dictated by the season and their structure.
- ~ **Remove the tree.** Some hazardous trees are best removed. If possible, plant a new tree in an appropriate place as a replacement.

As always, consult Biota Tech Services, Inc. if you have any questions about how to identify and deal with a hazardous tree.

~ Some Text Referenced from ISA Journals & Periodicals.

