What Dallas Homeowners Should Check After a Storm

Assessing Storm Tree Damage Safely

After high winds or a heavy storm pass through Dallas, the first thing many homeowners notice is damage to their trees. A split trunk, a fallen tree, or a hanging limb can make your property feel unsafe. It is important to approach the situation calmly and methodically. Before you do anything else, make sure you and your family are away from any immediate danger. Do not walk under damaged branches or near trees that look unstable. Once you are in a safe spot, you can begin a careful check of your property.

Storm damage cleanup can feel overwhelming, but breaking it down into a few key checks helps you see what needs attention first. The goal is to identify hazards, prevent further damage, and plan the next steps without rushing into risky work. Remember that some problems, especially those involving power lines or large hanging limbs, are best left to professionals.



Start With the Roof and Structure

Your home's roof is one of the most vulnerable parts of the house during a storm. A fallen tree or a heavy branch can punch a hole through shingles or even break through the decking. Even if the tree missed the house, a large limb that falls nearby can still cause roof impact by striking the edge or damaging gutters. Walk around the house and look for any visible damage. Check for missing shingles, dented flashing, or cracks in the chimney. If you see daylight through the roof boards, that is a sign of serious damage that needs temporary covering to keep rain out.

It is also wise to check the attic for any signs of water intrusion or structural movement. If you notice a sag in the ceiling or a new crack in the drywall, a tree or limb may have shifted the roof structure. In that case, you will need a contractor to inspect the framing before any repairs begin. Do not try to climb onto the roof yourself, especially if the surface is wet or covered with debris. A professional can assess the damage safely.

Check for Power Line Hazards

One of the most dangerous situations after a storm is a power line that has been pulled down or is resting on a tree. If you see a line on the ground, on a fence, or tangled in a fallen tree, stay far away. Assume every downed line is live. Do not touch it, do not try to move it with a stick or any tool, and do not walk near it. Water on the ground can conduct electricity, so keep children and pets away from the area. Call the utility company immediately and report the location. They will send a crew to secure the line before any cleanup can begin.



A power line hazard also includes lines that are still attached to the pole but are sagging low. A branch that is caught on the line can create tension, and the line could snap at any moment. Do not attempt to remove branches that are touching or near power lines. Mark the area with caution tape if you have it, and wait for the utility crew to give the all-clear. Your safety and the safety of your family come before any property concerns.

Inspect Trees for Structural Damage

Once you are sure there are no power line hazards near the trees you want to check, you can look at each tree for signs of structural failure. A split trunk is a common result of high winds. If you see a crack running vertically down the trunk, or if the trunk is split into two sections, the tree is likely unstable. This kind of damage often means the tree will need to be removed. A split trunk cannot heal, and the tree is a falling risk even on calm days.

A hanging limb is another common issue. This is a branch that has broken but is still attached to the tree, often by a strip of bark or a small piece of wood. A hanging limb can fall at any moment, especially if the wind picks up again. Look for branches that are pointing downward at an odd angle, or that are caught in the crotch of another branch. Do not stand under them. If the limb is small and within reach from the ground, you might be able to pull it down carefully with a long pole. If it is large or high up, call a tree service to remove it.

Also check the root system. A tree that has been pushed over by the wind may have lifted roots. If you see a mound of soil around the base of the tree, or if the trunk is leaning more than about 15 degrees, the tree may be at risk of falling. Sometimes a tree can be saved if it is small and can be pulled back upright, but large trees with exposed roots usually need to be removed. A professional can assess the root damage and tell you whether the tree is stable.

Clear Driveways and Walkways

A blocked driveway can keep you from getting in or out of your property. If a tree has fallen across the driveway, you will need to remove it to regain access. Before you start cutting, check that no power lines are tangled in the branches. Also look for any gas lines or water pipes that might be under the tree. If the tree is large, it is safer to have a tree service cut it into sections and haul it away. Trying to cut a large trunk with a chainsaw when you are not experienced can be dangerous, especially if the tree is under tension.

For smaller branches that are blocking a walkway, you can usually move them by hand or with a pruning saw. Wear heavy gloves and sturdy boots to protect yourself from splinters and sharp ends. Clear a path wide enough for people to walk safely. Do not stack debris on the lawn in a way that creates a tripping hazard. Pile it neatly at the curb if your city offers storm debris pickup, or arrange for a debris cleanup service to haul it away.



Look for Signs of Site Stabilization Needs

After a storm, the ground around your trees may be disturbed. Erosion, exposed roots, and shifting soil can all affect the long-term health of your trees. If a tree is still standing but the soil around its base has washed away, you may need to add fresh soil and mulch to protect the roots. This is part of site stabilization, which simply means making sure the tree has a stable foundation to grow in. If the ground is uneven or if there are deep ruts from equipment, you might want to level the area to prevent water from pooling around the trunk.

Another aspect of site stabilization is checking for leaning trees that have not yet fallen. If a tree is leaning but the roots are still mostly in the ground, it might be possible to brace it. However, this is a job for an arborist. They can determine if the tree can be saved or if it is a danger. Do not try to straighten a large leaning tree by yourself. The forces involved are huge, and you could injure yourself or damage the tree further.

For many homeowners, the most urgent need after a storm is fast help after storm damage. The earlier you can get a professional assessment, the sooner you can start the cleanup and

repair process. A tree service can handle the difficult parts: removing large hanging limbs, cutting up fallen trees, grinding stumps, and hauling away debris. They have the equipment and training to do the work safely, especially when the tree is near your house or power lines.

Document the Damage for Insurance

Before any cleanup begins, take photos and videos of all the damage. Capture wide shots that show the tree and its surroundings, as well as close-ups of specific damage like a split trunk or roof impact. This documentation will help if you file an insurance claim. Most homeowner policies cover tree removal if the tree has damaged a structure, but coverage for trees that fall without hitting anything varies. Check with your insurance agent to understand what your policy covers.

Keep receipts for any temporary repairs you make, such as tarping a roof or boarding up a window. These costs may be reimbursed. Do not throw away any damaged property until the insurance adjuster has seen it. If you need to remove a tree that is blocking a driveway or creating a hazard, take photos first and then proceed. Your insurance company will understand the need for urgent action.

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Plan for Future Storms

Once the immediate cleanup is done, think about what you can do to reduce the risk of storm damage next time. Regular tree maintenance, such as pruning dead branches and thinning the canopy, can help trees withstand high winds. A tree with a strong central leader and well-spaced branches is less likely to split. If you have trees that are known to be weak-wooded, like some species of pines or silver maples, consider having an arborist evaluate them. Sometimes removing a tree before a storm is the safest choice.

In the end, the best approach to storm damage cleanup is to work through the checks one at a time, starting with the most dangerous hazards. If you are ever unsure about a tree or a situation, the smart move is to call a professional. For many homeowners, knowing that they can get fast help after storm damage makes the whole experience less stressful. With a clear plan and a focus on safety, you can get your property back to normal without unnecessary risk.