**With the Forecast of a severe ice event for Maryland in the next 24 hours LGIT is providing this Loss Prevention Alert**

**Ice and Snow Storm Response**

**Guidance for Local Governments and Homeowners in Dealing with Tree Damage**

For trees, ice storms can be among the most devastating types of storms. A bad ice storm can effectively strip a tree of most of its branches, cause large trees to topple and create all sorts of hazards that can make it dangerous for people to be out and about during the storm, or in its aftermath.

**Immediate Response**

During and in the immediate aftermath of a severe ice storm **response should be left to the professionals and to emergency responders**. Ice storms can leave behind extremely hazardous conditions. These conditions include

* downed, live electrical wires;
* large, broken limbs hanging from trees or on the ground;
* broken or split trees in danger of falling;
* and precarious footing that can lead to falls and the inability to move quickly enough to avoid hazards.

During this period, while local governments and utilities are providing the immediate response necessary for public safety, it is best to keep out of harm's way.  If you have a situation that needs immediate response, such as a tree on your car or your house, call your town emergency services and follow their advice.

**In the Days and Weeks Following the Storm**

The best time to make decisions concerning individual trees may not be in the immediate aftermath of the storm.  Where possible, decisions regarding what action to take should be postponed until there is more time to consider how to respond.  The USDA Forest Service puts this into four basic pieces of advice (From "[Ice Storm Response – Helping Landscape Trees Recover from Ice Storms](http://www.ct.gov/deep/lib/deep/forestry/icestorm/icestormresponse.pdf)"):

* Don’t Panic
* Stop, Think and Be Patient
* Safety First and Foremost
* Get Professional Advice

Getting professional advice might well be the most important advice, particularly if a large or treasured tree is involved.  Damage often initially looks worse than it is, and it is easy to give in to the pressure of someone who has services to sell.  Before contacting an arborist, you may wish to do an initial assessment of the tree on your own.  When evaluating the damage on an individual tree, be certain to assess the damage top to bottom and 360o around the tree. Ice storms may cause roots to break and begin lifting from the soil.

They may also cause the trunk to split and branches to break off, partially or completely.  Some of these sorts of damage, such as extensively broken roots or a split trunk, may be by themselves sufficient to warrant the removal of tree.

Individual species of trees do differ in their susceptibility to the damage that ice storms bring ([Species List](http://www.ct.gov/deep/lib/deep/forestry/icestorm/specieslist.pdf)). Even within a species, individual trees will vary as their ability to survive the damage they receive. In other words, each tree should be considered on an individual basis.

Be also aware that, in many cases, damage from ice storms can be mitigated.The ability of trees to respond to extensive storm damage (e.g. – greater than 50 per cent canopy loss) can be surprising. For instance, researchers monitoring ice storm damaged trees in northern New England found that all of the red maple, sugar maple and ash trees that they were monitoring were still alive 5 years after the storm, even in circumstances where trees had lost more than 75% of the canopy ([Tree Survival and Growth Following Ice Storm Injury](http://www.ct.gov/deep/lib/deep/forestry/icestorm/treesurvival.pdf)).

This does not automatically mean that any ice damaged tree will survive, or that any tree that survives should be retained. Trees that are in poor health may be so severely weakened by the injury so as to succumb to other causes. Trees that survive the ice storm damage may be structurally compromised and so require removal for that reason, or it may develop extensive internal decay that may warrant removal at a later time ([Patterns of Storm Injury and Tree Response](http://www.ct.gov/deep/lib/deep/forestry/icestorm/patternstorminjuries.pdf)).

If the damage is minor and easily accessible, a homeowner may choose to work on the tree on their own.  If so - remember, all tree work has inherent dangers.  **Safety First!**  All pruning work should be done properly. The Forest Service has published a good manual on proper pruning techniques that is readily available for reference ([How to Prune Trees](http://www.ct.gov/deep/lib/deep/forestry/icestorm/htprune.pdf)).

**Longer Term Response**

Trees damaged by ice storms should be monitored over time to assess their progress towards recovery. Some trees that survive initially may prove vulnerable to insects or diseases later on; others may develop internal decay or otherwise become structurally unsafe.

Other damaged trees will respond in ways that might require some rehabilitative work to bring these trees back fully. Work of this type, such as restoration pruning, in most cases should be done by a licensed arborist.  The Arborist Law not only keeps a person not qualified to do the work from dangerous circumstances, but also requires that the work is done by someone who has demonstrated knowledge of the latest techniques and standards in arboriculture.

The challenges of responding to an ice storm are different for forest landowners and for municipalities.  Those who own forest land may want to consult with a certified forester. In the wake of an ice storm, municipalities may want to consider how to prepare for future ice storms. Excellent resources exist regarding planning for ice storms, such as [Trees and Ice Storms](http://www.ct.gov/deep/lib/deep/forestry/icestorm/icestorm.pdf), published by the Department of Forestry, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign