

Prepare Yourself and Your Trees for Storms – Big or Small

Storm safety tips from arborist and STIHL spokesperson Mark Chisholm



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VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. – As a third-generation arborist from New Jersey and three-time world tree-climbing champion, Mark Chisholm has been working with trees longer than he can remember. In the many years he has spent on branches around the world, Chisholm has learned that trees are much more vulnerable than one would assume. A tree might seem like it would be able to sustain the forces of a large storm, but sometimes the damage is just too difficult to see.

Ultimately, people need to be prepared before, during and after any storm – big or small.

Before the storm:

- 1) Develop a relationship with a certified arborist or tree care professional in your area. This will give you time to pick and choose the right company for you. When that storm hits, you'll be prioritized as an existing customer.
- 2) Have your tree care professional do an assessment before a storm hits.
 - They should be looking for any of the following: cracked trunks, hollow trunks, cavities, dead limbs, leaning trunks, mushrooms and shelf-like fungus growing out of the trunk. These features suggest that the tree may be in decline, suffering from a condition called heart rot or possibly buckling under its own weight, and causing danger.
 - They'll also look for targets: houses, power lines, sidewalks, pedestrians, playgrounds. A tree can fall at any point, not just during storms, and your neighbors or loved ones could be at risk.
- 3) Take measures to prevent damage.
 - After assessing the trees on your property, your arborist may need to take any number of measures to limit potential problems. They may use aerial lifts to prune your trees or cranes to help remove them or stabilize a tree with the help of cables. A tree or tree branches that pose a threat don't always have to be removed.

During the storm:

- Don't try to be a hero. Your property is not more important than your life and the lives of your loved ones. Prepare in advance, follow guidelines for evacuations, and don't hesitate to get assistance.

After The Storm

- 1) The first step is to always look up! Broken tree limbs may still be lodged in trees, but can easily fall. These are referred to as "widowmakers" for good reason. Be sure to also check the canopies over where your family typically walks to and from the house and where your children typically play.
- 2) Look for downed phone lines or power lines – even a tree leaning on a power line and the ground the tree is connected to can be energized. Treat everything as live and extremely dangerous until tested by professionals.
- 3) Evaluate what you can handle and what's for a pro – anything not on the ground should definitely be handled by a professional. If you think it's expensive to hire a professional, wait until you leave it to an amateur! Some of these things could be a threat to your life, so it makes sense to spend the money if you're not absolutely confident in your skills, or if it's anything off the ground.
- 4) When a tree is uprooted or downed, it creates an unnatural pattern of pressure points and tension. An unknowing **chain saw** operator may be in severe danger if attempting to cut a tensioned limb or trunk (called a "springpole") – it may have an extremely violent, catapult-like reaction. Always consult a professional.
- 5) If you're skilled enough to do work yourself, suit up properly, wear the proper **attire and protective equipment**. Follow the guidelines in **your instruction manual** for any power equipment you're using, but it should include hearing and **eye protection, proper helmet system, heavy duty nonslip gloves, and chain saw protective pants or chaps**.
- 6) Consider wildlife like bees that may have been taking temporary storm shelter while you are doing work – always proceed with caution.

Learn more tips on tree safety, chain saw safety, finding a tree care professional, and how to prepare for storms at the following websites:

www.STIHLusa.com
www.TreesAreGood.org
www.TreeCareTips.org
www.Treebuzz.com

About Mark Chisholm:

One part acrobat, one part expert rope climber, one part tree physiologist, and several parts competitor and thrill seeker, Mark Chisholm is a third-generation, certified arborist with his family-owned Aspen Tree Expert Company in New Jersey. His expertise in tree care has made him a sought after consultant and industry spokesperson for the world of arboriculture, and he regularly travels the globe to consult with international arborist organizations.

Sponsored by STIHL, Chisholm has won every International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) New Jersey Chapter Tree Climbing Championship for the last 19 years and has conquered the wider tree-climbing world on three occasions, most recently in 2010, when he won his third ISA International Tree Climbing Championship.

About STIHL Inc.:

STIHL Inc. manufactures the number one selling brand of gasoline-powered handheld outdoor power equipment in America for homeowners and professional landscapers*, as well as the number one selling brand of chain saws in the world. STIHL products are sold through servicing power equipment retailers from coast to coast – not mass merchants. STIHL products sold through U.S. STIHL dealers are for distribution in the United States only. For more information or for the name of a local STIHL retailer, call toll free 1-800-GO STIHL (1-800-467-8445) or visit the dealer locator on the STIHL website at www.stihlusa.com.

***"Number one selling brand" is based on syndicated Irwin Broh Research (commercial landscapers) as well as independent consumer research of 2009-2011 U.S. sales and market share data for the gasoline-powered handheld outdoor power equipment category combined sales to consumers and commercial landscapers.*

STIHL is pleased to support the work of [Independent We Stand](#) , the [Tree Research and Education Endowment Fund \(TREE Fund\)](#) , [International Society of Arboriculture \(ISA\)](#) , the [Tree Care Industry Association \(TCIA\)](#) , [National FFA](#) , [Professional Landcare Network \(PLANET\)](#) , the [American Tree Farm System \(ATFS\)](#) , and the [National Association of State Park Directors](#) .