



**Expert Contributor** Troy Hopkins, *Absolute Trees*

# Storm Ready?

**Does your hurricane readiness plan include tree care? Charleston coastal weather brings wind and rain storms which can often cause damage to trees and woodlands.**

**Storms can cause weak branches to rip trees apart. Trees with shallow root systems may blow over or break off at the ground. Whatever the case, these effects can cause both personal and property damage.**



The key to preventing damage is to consider circumstances that could result in tree damage and take action to correct potential problems before storms strike and property is damaged.

A tree is only as strong as its weakest union. Trees may have natural imperfections that lead to damage under storm conditions. A large tree may appear strong, but a V-shaped or U-shaped trunk indicates co-dominant leaders. This occurs when a tree has two or more branches that are trying to become the center point of the tree. A U-shaped

union is stronger and can better withstand wind. Without a proper union, branches may separate during storms.

Decay is the natural destruction of tree and root tissue. Look at the trunk of the tree for decay. Decay located within a single branch is not always a critical situation since weak branches can easily be removed. But, decay located within the main part of the trunk can be seriously dangerous.

Poor pruning practices that encourage decay are pruning too close to the trunk, leaving long stubs, "topping trees," or stripping bark when pruning. Pruning either corrects problems or creates them. If pruning is done improperly, it can create places for decay to enter. Done correctly, pruning wounds should close over naturally, keeping decay from starting and expanding in the wound area.

NEVER top trees! Topping creates hazards and shortens the life of a tree. Branches that sprout from just below the topping cut have very weak attachments and become hazards.

Root systems are vital to the health and longevity of trees. A shallow-rooted tree growing in soft soil or rain soaked soil combined with high winds is at risk of toppling. If wind can pass through a tree easily, it is less likely to blow over. Therefore, thin your trees to help protect them from hurricanes and other strong storms.

What to do? Take an assessment of your trees and make note of potential hazardous characteristics. When minor damage occurs, immediate corrective action should be applied to prevent further damage. If a tree is deemed hazardous, keep people, pets, and vehicles out of the area until the hazardous condition has been corrected.

In any situation where there are downed power lines contact SCE&G immediately.

When major damage occurs, and you need a chainsaw or ladder, if there are any potentially energized lines in the area of the tree, or if you are wondering if the tree is worth saving, you need a reputable tree care company to remove the potential danger. For more information about tree trimming or tree removal, contact Troy Hopkins, owner of Absolute Trees 843-810-4525. [AbsoluteTreeCompany.com](http://AbsoluteTreeCompany.com)

**Absolute Trees**

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