

# Disaster Relief

## *Clearing Debris from Land*

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You are responsible for clearing debris from your own property.

### **Determine Priorities**

Here are some guides for setting priorities for clearing debris from land after a severe storm:

- Land use and value – Clear streets and roads to allow emergency vehicles to pass freely. In pastures, remove any lumber containing nails or other pieces of metal that could injure livestock.
- Equipment available – Power saws, tractors, bulldozers, and trucks can be used to move fallen trees. If you have access to small equipment only, remove tree roots and small limbs before attempting to clear the area.
- Type of debris – Different vegetation requires different cleanup and salvage procedures. In woodlots and forests, experienced foresters should designate salvageable timber. You may need specialized equipment to clear large areas efficiently.

### **Remove Debris**

Here are some ways you can remove tree debris:

#### ***Bulldozing***

- Inspect damaged trees to see if they can be salvaged. Contact an Extension horticulturist or forestry specialist for this work.
- Remove valuable trees before clearing debris.
- If possible, attach a rake to the front of the bulldozer. This will let most of the soil pass through the teeth, eliminating undesirable mounds of soil.
- Remove the stumps. If you use bulldozers, leave stumps 6 to 10 feet high

for leverage. If you use a stump grinder, remove the trees at ground level.

#### ***Burial***

You can bury tree debris, but the cost is high. Use a chipping machine to eliminate smaller branches and reduce the burial space you need.

#### ***Landfill***

You can put tree debris in erosion gullies (where the land is not practical for terracing) or in swamps or low-lying areas. Consult a water resource specialist to determine how the landfill will change the water's path. You will need a bulldozer or other large equipment for this work. It is dangerous to use a tractor to push debris into gullies.

#### ***Burning***

Let trees dry until foliage begins to fall. Put debris in large compact piles and cover with fuel oil. Stoke piles and keep fire alive until all woody material is burned. In some areas you may need a permit to burn debris. Burning may be prohibited in some communities because of smoke pollution.

#### **Safety**

If you are not used to working with damaged or fallen timber, observe safety precautions to prevent injury or death.

- Stabilize ladders when pruning trees, or climb into trees to prune. Use a safety rope.
- Watch for falling limbs.
- Be careful of electric power lines. Leave extensive pruning around power lines to power companies. Wet limbs or dirt- or soil-soaked control

ropes on pruning equipment can be hazardous. Do not use pruning equipment with metal handles.

- If you have never used a chain saw before, do not attempt to use one after a disaster. If you have some experience with a chain saw, observe all safety precautions. Use a sharp saw. Shut off motor, even when you are moving only a few feet. Remember that you can't shout or hear warnings when the saw is running.
- Clear the area before beginning to saw limbs or trees. Determine the direction the tree will fall. Do not let trees fall into other tree branches. Plan an escape route in case the tree jumps off the stump when you cut it.