

# Treeways

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## Is Your Tree a Hazard Tree or a High Risk Tree?

**High-risk trees** are those trees that pose a significant risk to people or property and they should be worked on as soon as convenient. These trees may require pruning of dead or damaged limbs, cabling, other reinforcement, or even removal. **Hazard trees** are trees that pose an imminent threat to people or property and should be dealt with immediately to remove the threat. An elm tree that has just died due to Dutch elm disease may soon become a high-risk tree if it is near your house, playground or where people do their outdoor activities. If this newly dead elm is out in the woods further than its height it is probably not a high-risk tree. The idea that if there is **no target then there is no threat** is important.

Now a different dead elm tree has been standing for two years and the bark is falling off. Remember – no target = no problem. If this time the tree is in your yard and it is in range of hitting something or someone that you care about then you have a hazard tree situation. This must be dealt with ASAP because parts of the dead tree, maybe large parts, are going to start falling at inopportune times. Trees shed limbs when the strength of the branch wood becomes less than the weight of the branch. This may happen on a still, dry summer day or during a storm – and the timing is not predictable.

A certified arborist can help you make a determination whether you have a high-risk tree or a hazard tree. They should be able to help you sort through the options and reach a reasonable decision. Sometimes judicious pruning can mitigate the risk. There are times when removal is the only safe option no matter how much emotionally valuable a tree is.

There are many standing dead elm trees in the city. Once a dead elm's bark has fallen off they may fall in the next strong wind storm or warm, dry, still day and you never know which way Mother Nature will let them fall. That is the reason I pay particular attention to dead trees close enough and tall enough to fall onto City streets. Public safety is the reason the City asks that a dead or damaged tree on private property near a city street be taken down or removed. It is much safer and easier to remove a tree shortly after it dies and before it loses significant wood strength.

Ash trees are different from elms. Once an ash has died it may start shedding major branches within 10 months to a year. What this means is that a dead ash tree moves from being a high risk tree to a hazard tree in a much less time than a dead elm. That is something to consider with emerald ash borer on our doorstep. If you notice a tree that may have a significant risk to people or property please call ... we are all in this together.

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