

STORMS & TREE DAMAGE

Almost every year, storms and winds damage trees. In certain situations, city staff will declare a STORM event. This is declared when a weather event generates more tree debris than residents can reasonably expect to remove on their own or through contracted means. City staff will evaluate the amount of damage immediately following an event and determine whether a STORM will be declared. Staff will utilize criteria such as:

- Wind speed severity and direction (east and northeast winds generally cause more damage than south and west winds)
- Amount of large tree debris on the ground (events that generate large amounts of tree debris on a high percentage of properties will generate a STORM declaration)
- Intensity in a given area (some wind events are extremely localized but result in catastrophic damage, a small area of severe damage would generate a STORM declaration)

Following a storm qualifying event, the City Public Works department will declare the event a STORM by posting notice on the City's website and social media outlets. The decision to declare a STORM is not made without due consideration. When a STORM is declared this can generate up to a 3-week timeframe where all available street department resources are unavailable except for tree work. Hutchinson has 2 excellent resources in its compost bin program and the close proximity of the Creekside composting facility which residents are encouraged to take advantage of.

While any number of situations may arise following a storm, the usual situations are:

Storm Response

No declared storm: Property owners are responsible for cleaning up their own property and disposing of brush, limbs & debris. Brush, limbs & debris may be disposed of free of charge at Creekside Soils, 1500 Adams St SE.

Declared storm: The City provides service to property owners by picking up brush, limbs & debris. Property owners are responsible for cutting and neatly stacking brush, limbs & debris

along the curb. To be eligible, property owners must submit a **Report a Problem** form on the city's webpage or call Public Works at **234-4219** to identify their address and provide a description where the brush, limbs & debris are located.

The notice will identify a deadline, usually 7-10 days following the storm. After the deadline, property owners are responsible for cleaning up their own property and disposing of brush, limbs & debris.

City crews are not responsible for cleaning up complete private tree removals nor for picking up any brush, limbs & debris that are clearly unrelated to the storm event.

Severe storms & disasters: Severe storm and disaster response typically involves several city crews working throughout the City over a number of days. Priority is given to clearing public roadways, then to potentially hazardous tree conditions and finally to brush, limbs & debris cleanup. Crews will use a variety of heavy equipment to efficiently remove tree debris. City crews may hold off picking up brush, limbs & debris for a time. This is done so operations can be orderly and efficient while clearing the storm's path, specific neighborhoods, or proceeding street by street.

Damage to Private Property

City-owned tree damages private property: The property owner must notify the City as soon as possible. As soon as it is practicable, considering other priorities, City crews will be dispatched to remove the brush, limbs & debris. Property owners may utilize their own tree removal crews at their discretion and expense. Property owners must arrange for and make repairs to their private property. Property owners should contact their homeowner's insurance company. Property owners may make a claim against the City for damages by providing written documentation to the City of Hutchinson Finance Department. Claims must include name, address, dates of when damage occurred and when notification was provided to the City, damage descriptions and repair costs.

Privately-owned trees on City right-of-way or property: City crews will typically remove brush, limbs & debris up to or near enough to property lines to ensure safe passage for traffic and safe use of rights-of-way. Property owners are responsible for removing the remainder.

Privately-owned tree damages private property: Property owners should make their own arrangements to remove brush, limbs & debris and to arrange for any necessary repairs. Because city crews are busy addressing damage to and from publicly-owned trees, they are typically not available to provide services involving private trees on private property. However, the City may provide limited services to private property under emergency situations. For example, forestry crews may assist other emergency responders gain necessary access to private property.

Situation	Responsible party
Brush, limbs & debris from trees Minor events (no storm declared) –	Following minor events, property owners are responsible for removing & disposing of debris.
Brush, limbs & debris from trees Declared storms (declared storm) –	Following declared storms, property owners contact City to report address and location of brush. City crews pick up debris that is stacked neatly along the curb until the posted deadline.
City-owned tree on City-owned property	Parks/Public Works
City-owned tree on City right-of-way	Public Works
City-owned tree damages private property.	Property owners notify City. City crews remove debris. Property owner may remove debris. Property owners arrange for repairs. Property owner may make a claim against the City for damages.
Privately-owned tree on City-owned property or right-of-way	City crews may clear debris from public property, as necessary. Remaining debris is the property owner's responsibility.
Privately-owned tree damages private property.	Property owners arrange to remove debris and make repairs. City crews typically do not assist, except in emergencies.