



State of Louisiana

Department of Health and Hospitals

Office of the Secretary

Tree Removal Safety

Cutting down a healthy tree or removing damaged or fallen trees is dangerous work, and doing it safely requires training and experience. Even skilled individuals who think they know how to do this are often hurt or killed because they misjudge the direction the tree will fall or something else unexpected happens. Individuals without training are even more prone to such accidents. The fatigue and stress associated with recovering from a natural disaster can make the job even more difficult.

A damaged tree that is not posing a danger to anyone can remain in place until a crew of trained professionals is able to remove it. Trees hung up by an obstruction or otherwise prevented from falling are extremely dangerous, and their removal should only be attempted by professionals. Heavy equipment is often required.

If you are considering cutting down a tree on your own, keep in mind the warnings below.

- Never attempt to cut a tree into the wind.
- Large limbs can interfere with a tree's fall.
- Decay within the trunk can result in a tree falling in an unexpected direction.
- Surrounding trees, structures, power lines and wind can interfere with a falling tree's motion, causing it to fall in an unexpected direction.
- The natural lean of a tree can result in a tree falling in an unexpected direction.
- A tree trunk larger than a chain saw's bar length should only be cut down by a professional.

If you absolutely feel it necessary to cut down a tree after considering those warnings, follow the steps below.

- Determine two routes of escape from the direction you expect the tree to fall. If necessary, clear debris and brush to form the pathways.
- Use safety equipment, including gloves, goggles, boots, long pants, a long-sleeved shirt and a helmet or hard hat.
- Decide which way you want the tree to fall. On this side of the tree, make a notch by cutting down into the tree trunk at a 45-degree angle and then cutting upward into the trunk with another 45-degree-angled cut. The notch's total depth should be one-fifth to one-fourth the tree's width.
- Make the cut to fell the tree on the opposite side of the notch, one to two inches above the center, or deepest point, of the notch.
- **Do not cut all the way through the tree.** Instead, cut until the tree starts to fall, turn off the saw and remove it from the tree.
- As soon as the tree begins to fall, put the saw on the ground and move quickly but carefully along one of the two escape paths you picked out earlier.
- **Do not turn to watch the tree fall**, as this may cause you to trip.

- As a tree falls, several unexpected things can happen. The tree could kick back off the stump, catch unexpectedly or otherwise create a potentially lethal danger to your safety.
- **If the tree does not fall, do not pull it with chains or ropes or push it with your hands.** Instead, hammer metal wedges into the back cut with a maul or sledge until it begins to fall and immediately proceed along one of your escape paths.