

Be prepared

Dealing with Downed Poles and Trees after a Storm

Storms often damage utility poles, power lines and trees, which can create life-threatening hazards. Here are tips for dealing safely with broken poles, wires or trees:

- ◆ Treat all downed power poles or utility lines as if they're live and carrying electric current. Never touch or try to move them. Stay completely clear!
- ◆ Stay away from anything else a downed pole or power line might come in contact with. For instance, metal fences can become electrified by fallen wires.
- ◆ Consider even cable television or telephone wires dangerous; any wire can be energized if it falls or gets wrapped around an energized line, even a block away.
- ◆ If you see a downed pole or line, call your utility company or your police or fire department to have it barricaded until it can be repaired. Warn others to stay away, and keep a particularly sharp eye on children and pets.
- ◆ Never attempt to remove a person or animal caught in power lines, because bodies conduct electricity. Call 911 for help.
- ◆ If a power line is in water, consider the water as dangerous as the wire.
- ◆ Beware of downed lines touching an unoccupied vehicle. Stay away from the vehicle.
- ◆ Never drive over a fallen wire or under a dangling one. If a power line hits your car while you're inside, stay put and wait for help. If the car catches fire, jump clear without touching the vehicle and the ground at the same time. Bunny hop away with both feet together.
- ◆ Watch out for power lines that might be tangled in damaged trees.
- ◆ Never use metal ladders or metal pruning tools when clearing debris near power lines.
- ◆ Never climb trees near power lines.
- ◆ Beware of trees that are leaning, partly uprooted or that have large broken or

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cracked branches. Any of these can fall on you. Be leery of trees with roots that might be in soggy ground.

- ◆ If you clean up broken branches, always use proper safety equipment such as heavy gloves, goggles, boots, long-sleeve shirts and long pants. Drink plenty of fluids. Ask for help when you need it. Lift with your legs, not with your back.
- ◆ If you use a chainsaw, obey its safety guidelines.

Here's the most important thing of all to remember when you see storm damage:
When in doubt, stay away from it!

Sources: St. Petersburg Times; Potomac Electric Power Co.; Alabama Power; Pacific Gas & Electric Co.; Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative; Washington State Department of Natural Resources; St. Lawrence County (N.Y.) Cooperative Extension.

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Kentucky's Touchstone Energy Cooperatives 