

AFTER THE STORM...



STORM SEASON ADVICE FOR URBAN TREES

Are You Prepared?

After the Storm...

Is there hope? (Stop before you chop!)

A storm like the one that hit Brisbane in November 2008 or the Gold Coast area in May 2009 can leave many trees in a neighbourhood looking like there's no hope for the future. Trees may have fallen, snapped, or lost large branches.

Concerned? If you are concerned about the safety of trees that are still standing, it is worthwhile considering the fact that they have weathered many other storms in the past. However, if you value your trees consider engaging an Arborist to check their health and stability.

How to select an Arborist

▶ **AVOID DOOR KNOCKERS:** Many so-called arborists have no training, and their best skills are removing money from the pockets of unsuspecting consumers. Unskilled workers may do more harm than good.

▶ Look in the Yellow Pages for Qualified Arborists under Tree Surgery or Arboriculturists. The Queensland Arboricultural Association (QAA) has Qualified Members in your area.

▶ Ask for Certificates of Insurance: Public Liability (minimum \$10,000,000) and Workers Compensation. Consultants should also have Professional Indemnity insurance.

Some questions to ask:

- ▶ Other than the obvious damage, is the tree generally healthy?
- ▶ Are major limbs or the main leader broken?
- ▶ Is at least half of the tree undamaged?
- ▶ How large are the wounds?
- ▶ Is the tree appropriate for the site upon which it is growing?
- ▶ Is there evidence of ground heave around the base of the tree?

Your Arborist should address all of these questions in their assessment. If you are dissatisfied, make sure that *you* ask questions of *them*.



positive energy



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Before the Storm... How to Prepare

Have your trees inspected regularly (e.g. every two years) so that any problems can be addressed early and at a time that suits you. A qualified and experienced arborist can do this efficiently and economically.

Look for potential hazards and investigate the condition of your trees. You or a qualified arborist should look for damage such as: cracks in the trunk or major limbs; hollow, aged and decayed trees; hanging branches; improperly formed branches; one-sided or significantly leaning trees; and branches that may come into contact with the house.

Know your tree - Some species are more prone to storm damage. You should have a qualified arborist evaluate your trees for hardiness and resilience. Being aware of trees which may succumb to harsh weather conditions will help you decide if you want to replace these potentially dangerous species.

Do not top or lop your trees- Untrained individuals may urge you to cut back or lop all of the branches, on the mistaken assumption that it will help avoid breakage in future storms. However, professional arborists say that topping, the cutting of main branches back to stubs, is extremely harmful and unhealthy for your trees. Re-growth will be weakly attached branches that are higher and are more likely to break when a storm strikes. Also, topping will reduce the amount of foliage, on which the tree depends for the food and nourishment needed for re-growth. A topped tree that has already sustained major storm damage is more likely to die than repair itself.

Protect your assets- Trees may increase property value by up to 20%. Find out if your homeowner's insurance will cover any damage your landscape may sustain due to natural causes and include the total value of your trees when listing your assets for

coverage. A qualified arborist can provide an estimated value by inspecting your trees.

Trees are dynamic living things that require proper care. Hiring a qualified arborist who can assist you with pre-storm inspections and post-storm repairs can help avoid unnecessary loss of your trees.

Advice for pruning:

- ▶ If the work is high in the tree, or involves large branches, it's a job for a professional climbing arborist. Check the Yellow Pages, or use your favourite search engine to locate a "Tree Surgeon" or "Arborist" and look for companies that employ Qualified Arborists (Minimum AQF Level 3).
- ▶ Ensure that the Arborist that you employ is familiar with **Australian Standard AS4373 (2007) Pruning of Amenity Trees.**
- ▶ If the tree is young, it may be able to recover and develop new structure. A Qualified Arborist can help with this, regardless of the size of the tree.
- ▶ **DO NOT TOP OR LOP TREES.** Untrained or uninformed tree loppers may urge you to cut back all of the branches to shape the tree, or may suggest that shorter trees will be less likely to fail in future wind storms. **Topped or lopped trees are more likely to fail in the future than un-topped trees.**
- ▶ Remember that the decisions you make may have long term consequences for your trees.
- ▶ You may need your local Council's approval before you heavily prune or remove any tree. Your Arborist will be able to advise you on local laws for your particular area.



Trees & Powerlines Keeping you safe

Energex understands that trees provide shade, amenity and habitat for native wildlife. We also have a very clear understanding of the dangers posed when trees and powerlines are in close proximity, particularly during storm season. **Energex's** Trees and Powerlines Program works to maintain trees and vegetation for a safe community and to deliver a safe and reliable electricity supply to your home. **Energex** spends more than **\$60 million each year** maintaining trees and other vegetation around powerlines. **Energex** recommends hiring a Qualified Arborist for tree trimming work around privately owned powerlines. **Energex's** Vegetation Management contractors use nationally approved pruning techniques (*Australian Standard AS 4373 'Pruning of Amenity Trees') to maintain a tree's health while encouraging growth to continue in a safer direction.

Energex & the Queensland Arboricultural Association (QAA)

Energex believes that Training is key in maintaining trees safely around powerlines. Our partnership with the QAA is a big step toward this goal. We will work together to improve training and education within both of our industries, ensuring that where possible, trees and powerlines continue to coexist harmoniously.

How to contact Energex

General Enquiries: 13 12 53

8.00am - 6.30pm Monday to Friday

Loss of power supply / electricity supply problems: 13 62 62

Reporting a dangerous situation, such as wires down: 13 19 62

By mail: ENERGEX Limited, GPO Box 1461, Brisbane Q 4001



The Queensland Arboricultural Association (QAA), is a not for profit organisation supporting tree care and the tree care industry throughout Queensland.

We are dedicated to the ideal of a sustainable urban forest.