
ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet



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Cleaning Up Winter Storm Damage in Shoreland Areas

New Hampshire often experiences severe and damaging winter weather - most recently the destructive ice storm of '98 which caused extensive tree damage in several areas of the state. Property owners, particularly those with waterfront property, are well advised to thoroughly plan out cleanup efforts before they begin cutting or removing any trees or brush. The N.H. Department of Environmental Services (DES) offers the following advice for storm damage cleanup to help ensure compliance with the N.H. Comprehensive Shoreland Protection Act (CSPA), RSA 483-B.

Protecting the Shoreland. The DES Shoreland Protection Program urges property owners not to hastily remove storm-damaged trees, thinking that they are going to die or that they are otherwise exempt from tree-cutting regulations set forth under RSA 483-B. In areas that fall within the shoreland protection zone (within 150 feet of a public waterbody), the regulations pertaining to tree removal still apply regardless of the circumstances, e.g. ice storms. Dead, diseased, unsafe, or fallen trees, saplings, shrubs, or groundcovers may be removed. Their removal is not counted toward the limitations of tree removal set forth by RSA 483-B. However, in order for trees to be removed as designated "hazardous trees," property owners should consult with a certified forester or arborist.

Assessing the Damage. The N.H. Division of Forests and Lands offers the following criteria in assessing the effects of storm damage on the health and longevity of trees: Trees with branches broken off should completely recover. Those with extensive trunk damage may survive with human intervention, however their longevity may be in question. Anyone with questions about damaged trees are urged to contact an arborist for advice. Most often, winter storms cause "cosmetic" damage to trees, and within a few years those trees will replace their lost limbs and foliage.

Other Considerations. Also be aware of the following restrictions as they pertain to RSA 483-B. The operation of wheeled machinery within a wetland requires a permit. Slash piles and chipping are not allowed within 50 feet of the reference line of a waterbody. Burning is not allowed within 50 feet of the water. Stump removal is also not permitted within 50 feet of the reference line. DES recommends that property owners take photographs of trees that have been seriously damaged before they are removed. Lastly, please give tree removal careful consideration - it takes decades for a tree to reach maturity, and only minutes to cut it down.

DES recommends that anyone planning to cut trees within the protected shoreland zone be aware of the regulations set forth by RSA 483-B.

Further information may be requested by calling DES's Shoreland Protection Program at 271-7109 or 271-6876.