**Clearing Debris from Land**

You are responsible for clearing debris from your own property after tornado or other natural disaster. The first consideration in any cleanup effort is safety! If you lack the equipment or knowledge to safety clear debris, contact professional assistance! Call your insurance agent as soon as possible after the event, ideally before beginning cleanup.

**Determine Priorities**

After a severe storm, priorities for clearing debris from land should be determined by:

***1) Land use and value.***

* Clear streets and roads to allow emergency vehicles to pass freely
* In pastures, remove any lumber containing nails or other pieces of glass or metal that could injure livestock.
* Clear away large sections of roofs or buildings which will damage cover grass or interfere with grazing.

1. ***Equipment available***

* Power saws, tractors, bulldozers, and trucks can be used to move fallen trees.
* If you have access to small equipment only, remove tree roots and small limbs before attempting to clear the area.

1. ***Type of debris***

* Different vegetation requires different clean-up and salvage procedures.
* In woodlots and forests, experienced foresters should designate salvageable timber.
* Specialized equipment may be needed to clear large areas efficiently.

**Remove Debris**

Several methods may be used to remove tree debris:

***Mulching/Recycling***

* Communities often organize collection of tree debris for chipping and recycling after storm events.
* Monitor local news sources for collection procedures, locations, and times.

***Bulldozing***

* Inspect damaged trees to determine if they can be salvaged. Contact an Extension horticulturist or forestry specialist for this work.
* Remove valuable trees before clearing debris.
* If possible, attach a rake to the front of the bulldozer. This will allow most of the soil to pass through the teeth, eliminating undesirable mounds of soil.
* When removing trees, consider how to plan to remove the stumps. If bulldozers will be used, leave stumps 6 to 10 feet high for leverage. If a stump grinder will be used, remove the trees at ground level.

***Burial***

* Tree debris can be buried, but the cost is high.
* Use a chipping machine to eliminate smaller branches and reduce the amount of burial space needed.

***Landfill***

* In some cases, tree debris can be placed in erosion gullies. (Consult a water resource specialist before disposing of debris in this manner!)
* A bulldozer or other large equipment is needed for this work. It is dangerous to use a tractor to push debris into gullies.

***Burning***

* Burning may be prohibited in some communities because of smoke pollution.
* In some areas you may need a permit to bum debris.
* If burning is permitted:
  + Let trees dry until foliage begins to fall.
  + Put debris in large compact piles.
  + Stoke piles and keep fire alive until all woody material is burned.

**Safety**

When working with damaged or fallen timber, observe safety precautions to prevent injury or death. If you are not experienced with woodcutting and the use of chainsaws and related equipment, hire someone who is qualified – the risk of injury is too great!!!

* Wear appropriate personal protective equipment and use appropriate procedures.
* Watch for falling limbs.
* Avoid power lines! Leave pruning around power lines to power companies.
* Observe safety precautions with a chain saw.
* Clear the area before beginning to saw limbs or trees
  + Determine the direction the tree will fall.
  + Do not allow trees to fall into other tree branches.
  + Plan an escape route in case the tree jumps off the stump when it is cut.

Again, if you do not have experience with chainsaws and woodcutting, or if you are not physically capable of the task, call a professional!