



Storm clouds linger



KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

This storm blew through Colby late Wednesday, dropping about 2/10 of an inch of rain in about five minutes. Elsewhere in the county the storm produced 3/4 inch hail and damaging winds.

Learn to identify and treat types of tree damage at home

Storms cause tremendous stress and severe damage to trees in the urban forest. Obviously, a snapped or downed tree should be removed. What about a tree that suffers minor damage? How can a homeowner tell if a tree is safe?

Assessing the damage

Minor damage – with only the smallest branches of the tree being injured – usually results in little or no permanent injury to the tree. All that is required is cleanup of the broken twigs and branches and perhaps a crown cleaning to restore a pleasing shape.

More severe damage – large broken branches, split crotches, removal of bark and splitting or splintering of the trunk – can be caused by strong winds and heavy storms. When a tree is severely damaged, the first question that must be answered is, “Is the condition of the tree such that keeping it is worthwhile?” A tree care professional should be consulted to answer this question.

“Most arborists will take the time and effort to save a tree only if the tree will still be healthy, attractive and of value to the property owner after repairs,” explains Tchukki Andersen, staff arborist for the Tree Care Industry Association. “A tree care expert may recommend removal of a tree that has

brittle wood and a branch structure that makes it vulnerable to additional damage from future storms. Trees that have been topped by storms can be prime candidates for removal,” says Andersen.

Other factors to consider when determining if a tree is worth saving:

- Species – Is this type of tree prone to pests and other problems?
- Age – Is the tree mature or over-mature?
- Vigor – What health condition was the tree in before the damage?
- Value it adds to the property – Does the tree still have value, even if partially damaged?
- Sentimental value – Is the tree a living monument?

If a tree is not worth saving, remove it as soon as possible. If it is not removed and the tree dies, it could become a hazard tree. Removal of hazard trees is dangerous to the tree care crew and requires special techniques, adding to the cost.

Treating the tree

Assuming the decision has been made to repair the tree, the next question is, “Am I capable of repairing the damage myself or should I seek professional help?” Major repair will undoubtedly re-

quire the use of a chain saw and climbing equipment. Unless one is experienced in the use of such equipment and comfortable working off the ground, it would be best to have the work performed by a professional.

Inspect your trees for damage after a storm. If a tree has hazards, such as broken, hanging limbs or a split fork, you should have an assessment. This is important because you could be held liable if the hazard branch or tree falls and damages property or causes personal injury.

Keep kids injury-free in summer activities

While summer is a memorable time for children, less time in the classroom and more time going swimming, bike riding or playing in the back yard can lead to a higher exposure to serious, yet preventable, injuries.

There are some simple steps parents can take to ensure that children enjoy their favorite summertime activities while avoiding a visit to the emergency room.

This summer across the U.S., children ages 14 and under will be rushed to emergency rooms nearly 3 million times for serious injuries resulting from motor vehicle crashes, drownings, bike crashes, pedestrian incidents, falls and other hazards.

“In the injury prevention community, summer is also known as ‘trauma season’ because of the dramatic increase in the number of children injured from May through August,” said Cherie Sage, director for Safe Kids Kansas. “Sadly, by the end of this summer, more than 2,000 children in the U.S. will die because of injuries that could have been prevented.”

Parents and caregivers should keep these tips in mind so safety stays a top priority this summer.

Actively supervise your child when swimming and playing on playgrounds and backyards.

Use the appropriate safety gear for activities, such as a helmet for wheeled sports and sporting activities, a car seat or booster seat as appropriate and a life jacket for open water swimming and boating.

Role model proper safety behavior. Children are more likely to follow safety rules when they see their parents doing so.

If you have a pool or a spa, it should be surrounded on all four sides by a fence at least four feet high with self-closing, self-latching gates, and it should be equipped with an anti-entrapment drain cover and safety vacuum release system. An inflatable pool needs to be surrounded by a fence, just like any other pool, and parents need to empty these pools when not in use.

Make sure your home playground is safe. Keep 12 inches of safe surfacing, such as mulch, shredded rubber or fine sand, extending at least six feet in all directions around the equipment. Remove hood and neck drawstrings from your child’s clothing.

Keep children away from the grill while preheating and cooking, and while the grill is cooling.

Remove potential poisons from your yard, including poisonous plants, pesticides and pool

chemicals.

- Walk all the way around a parked vehicle to check for children before entering a car and starting the motor. Don’t let children play in driveways, streets, parking lots or unfenced yards adjacent to busy streets.
- Never leave your child alone in a vehicle – not even for a minute. Vehicle interiors can heat up to dangerous levels quickly and cracking a window does little or nothing to let heat escape. Always take your child with you.
- Apply sunscreen rated SPF 15 or higher to your child’s exposed skin 15 to 30 minutes before going out, and reapply frequently.
- Make sure your child drinks plenty of water. A child who seems tired or achy should rest in the shade or go inside for a while. Get immediate medical help any time a child’s skin is hot to the touch (with or without perspiration), if a child has a seizure, or if they become disoriented in hot weather.

Active supervision, proper protective gear, and other simple prevention steps will help your child avoid danger. For information about summer safety, call us at (785) 296-1223, (785) 296-0351, or visit www.safekids.org.

It’s true: winning isn’t everything

Winning an argument may also mean losing a friend or friendship, or damaging a relationship with a spouse, child or other family member, Charlotte Shoup Olsen, K-State family systems specialist, said.

When a disagreement occurs, take the time to listen to the other side without passing judgment. Take

time out to consider the issues and explore compromises that allows both parties to feel like winners.

When both parties are pleased with the outcome, the relationship typically benefits as well.

More about communications skills and successful relationships is available at www.ksre.ksu.edu.

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