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FOREST SERVICE

# Ice Damage and Oak Wilt

If your oak trees were damaged by a recent ice storm, you may be wondering what you should (and shouldn't) do to clean up the damage while also protecting them from oak wilt.

While painting fresh wounds on oak trees is important to prevent the spread of oak wilt, wounds that were caused by the ice storm are no longer fresh. In cold conditions, trees quickly stop exuding sap and sap-feeding beetles are not active, so it is unlikely that oak wilt will spread as a result of an initial ice storm event.

## Things that should be addressed right away include:

- Broken limbs on roofs, fences or other structures
- Limbs blocking driveways and travel lanes
- Hanging limbs that could cause personal or property damage if they fall

Prune safely within your ability and **DO NOT** remove limbs on or near power lines. For work you cannot complete safely or that is beyond your ability, find a Certified Arborist. <https://isatexas.com/for-the-public/find-an-arborist/>

Be sure to immediately paint any new wounds on oak trees that are created during cleanup using wound dressing or latex paint. Immediately means make one cut then paint it before making the next cut. Clean all pruning tools with a 10% bleach solution or Lysol™ before pruning a different tree.

Additional cosmetic pruning of oaks should be delayed until summer, once the threat of oak wilt spread has diminished. **Avoid pruning oaks February through June!** Any trees that are not oaks can be pruned at any time and painting the wounds is not necessary.

When disposing of debris, burning should be delayed until spring green-up when wildfire danger is reduced. If debris must be disposed of immediately, a chipper is recommended. <https://tfsweb.tamu.edu/PreventWildfire/>

Most live oaks, and many other trees that currently have leaves, also suffered freeze damage. However, it is difficult to determine the true extent of this damage until after spring green-up. Trees are quite resilient and the damage may not be as bad as it initially seems. So **be patient**, prune selectively and be sure to paint any fresh wounds on all oak trees.

For more information on oak wilt, visit <https://texasoakwilt.org/>

For more on storm recovery, visit <https://tfsweb.tamu.edu/afterthestorm/>

