

MEMORANDUM



TO: VICTOR CARDENAS, INTERIM CITY MANAGER
FROM: JEFFREY HERCZEG, DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS
SUBJECT: STORM RESPONSE AND ASSISTANCE FOR OLDER ADULTS
DATE: MARCH 9, 2023

Mayor and Council –

Following up on Council direction
from last Monday's meeting.

- Victor

The City currently lists Tree trimming companies commonly working throughout Novi where we have heard some positive reviews from residents (below); however, staff remains careful not to recommend anyone. The City's Forester, Keith Salowich, also wrote up a [Novi.org post](#) a while back about how to hire a decent tree company. Residents may find it useful.

- Cut My Tree Down (Novi vendor)
- Limb Walkers Tree Service (Novi vendor)
- Westside Forestry
- Treeman Tree Service
- Stewart's Tree Service
- Guardian Tree
- Monster Tree Service
- Davey Tree
- Asplundh

As for the storm response –

The City's two forestry vendors ([highlighted above](#)) charge us based on contract pricing of \$300/HR/per crew (~400/HR OT and Saturdays) for the curbside chipping. [As of today, we have spent around \\$55K \(estimate for total is several hundred thousand\), and the service requests are now over 1,300 and climbing.](#) Staff is arranging routes so pickup is done more systematically. Thus far, our contractors have prioritized and committed crews to Novi and continue to make progress. With more snow predicted Friday and the volume of calls, the cleanup could go on for several weeks. Additional communications to residents are forthcoming.

Staff has requested contractors to extend their contract prices on chipping to Novi residents since that is somewhat predictable (we will await their response). However, "price gouging" for removals on private property is difficult to govern during emergencies. The work is wildly unpredictable and based on tree size, location, risk, equipment needed. The best option for residents is to refer to the contractor list above.

For years, the City has maintained a list of residents who are unable to get their trash carts to the road. Eligibility for the list is an approved doctor's note. Currently the list sits at 44 individuals/households. Staff can cross reference the list with the requests for tree limb assistance and determine if any assistance with tree limb removal is required. Additionally, we can proactively reach out to pre-approved residents and inquire if they need assistance.

To alleviate confusion in communications and address future events, below is the proposed storm response policy recommended by staff and the city attorney.

Forestry Storm Response Plan

Categorizing Storms

There are three categories of storms: Minor storms, major storms, and disasters. Each category has a different level of intensity and therefore requires a different response.

Minor Storms

Cleanup operations should be completed within a ten day period and may be performed with Department of Public Works resources. Typical minor storm damage occurs in wind conditions of 40 to 60 mph or from ice accumulations of ¼ to ½" on tree surfaces. Debris cleanup will follow predetermined routes as assigned by management.

Major Storms

Cleanup operations will range from 11 days to several weeks. The City may have to seek outside assistance from contractors/solid waste haulers to assist with cleanup efforts. Typical major storm damage occurs in wind conditions of 60 to 80mph or from ice accumulations over ½" on tree surfaces, accompanied with strong winds. Debris cleanup will be performed by private and city crews following predetermined routes as assigned by management.

Disasters

A disaster is an emergency exceeding the response capabilities of DPW resources. Storm conditions are in excess of the aforementioned, and damage is typically widespread. Crews can expect extensive road closures, power outages, and structural damage due to downed trees and strong winds. Cleanup will take several weeks or months and will require the coordination of multiple agencies.

Roles and Responsibilities

Manager of Field Operations, City Forester, On-Call Supervisor

1. Provide early warning of impending storm to the leadership team
2. Monitor storm intensity and provide information to crews.
3. Work with Public Safety to coordinate overall storm response, number of personnel, and equipment required.
4. Determine whether to keep crews beyond normal business hours.
5. Classify the event as minor storm, major storm, or a disaster.
6. Determine how to allocate departmental resources.

Damage Assessment

In the event of a major storm, staff shall be used to identify high priority situations that will be addressed first. The number of staff used for this identification will depend on the severity of the storm. Cleanup will begin based on priority and then follow typical major and local road routes.

Tree Damage Cleanup Priorities

Priority 1- Life Threatening Situations

1. Trees down and blocking access to injured people following a 9-1-1 emergency call for assistance
2. High risk trees imminently threatening the inhabitants
3. Trees on public property that are damaged and pose an imminent risk to public safety

Priority 2- Trees Blocking Streets

Trees down and blocking streets will be cleared as directed by DPW and Public Safety. Woody debris will be piled between the sidewalk and curb for final cleanup. After all official requests have been completed the cleanup will continue following typical street routes.

- Major
- Local

Priority 3- General Cleanup

1. Trees cleared from streets in Priority 2 and piled between the sidewalk and curb are removed.
2. All uprooted and damaged trees on public property are addressed.
3. Any brush not chipped on location will be hauled to designated dump sites (TBD) to be chipped at a later date.
4. Pending storm severity, notice will be given to the public regarding City cleanup of private brush.
5. Stumps resulting from tree removals on public property will be placed on a grinding schedule and removed..
6. Sites requiring replanting will be placed on the tree replacement list and planted as time and funding allow.

Trees on Private Property

During a storm DPW will only intervene on private property when:

1. Requested by Public Safety to remediate life threatening situations.
2. To clear private trees that have fallen into the City right-of-way (ROW). Trees will be cut up and cleared back to the ROW line.

Cleanup of Residential Brush

Pending storm severity and after DPW resources have completed all priority work, the following services will be provided to residents of the City (these services do not include private businesses, apartments, etc.).

Brush up to 8 inches in diameter will be picked up at the curb. All brush must be moved to the roadside, butt end toward the road. Do not block roads or sidewalks. Only brush damaged in the recent storm will be accepted; no old, stockpiled brush will be cleaned up. Do not bag or bundle brush with string, rope, or wire. The City will not typically pickup fire wood or limbs over 8 inches in diameter.

Pick up will be done systematically through service requests to DPW by residents. DPW may employ chipping contractors and solid waste haulers (per existing service contracts) for curbside removal. Dates and routes for pick up will be determined for residents based on the storm classification and available resources.