

Address hazard trees with the tree warden



The town tree warden serves as an advocate for trees in the town’s public places and right-of-ways and as a resource for citizens wanting to know more about public safety concerns as related to roadside vegetation.

The Vermont Tree Warden Statutes specify that tree wardens can authorize the removal of hazardous, infested, or infected shade or ornamental trees in public places (including the right-of-way) without a public hearing. Removal of other shade or ornamental trees requires a public hearing during which neighboring landowners and interested parties can voice their support or concerns. Selectboards or road commissioners may authorize removal of those

roadside trees outside of the residential part of town and deemed not under the jurisdiction of the tree warden. Recognize, however, that the “residential part of town” is not defined in state statute. Additionally, for a tree to be considered a *hazard* tree by the tree warden and be removed without a public hearing, the tree itself must be a hazard, not its placement. If a roadside tree is close to the road edge but not damaged, infested, or infected, it cannot be deemed a hazard tree by the tree warden.

Recommendations

Know the [Vermont Tree Warden Statutes](#).¹ Last amended in 1969, these statutes outline the role and responsibilities of the tree warden when declaring and managing infested or damaged trees. Stay up to date on any [amendments](#)² to the statutes. And follow the [Guidelines for Public Hearings for Tree Removals](#).³

Learn to identify structural defects in weak and damaged trees. [Tree risk management](#)⁴ is a routine part of urban tree management but should also apply to rural roads.

Retain an updated map of hazard trees as identified by the road foreman and tree warden during a yearly roadside tree survey. This could be done on paper or electronically – Vermont Urban & Community Forestry can help with electronic resources.

Be prepared for storm damage.⁵ Ensure that hazards presented by storm-damaged trees are managed by practitioners who are trained to work with trees in poor condition.

Ensure that qualified line clearance arborists prune or remove trees within 10 feet of a utility line. They are usually certified by the [Electrical Hazards Awareness Program](#).⁶ No one without this certification should work near utility lines.

1. Vermont Tree Warden Statutes, V.S.A. Title 24 § 2502–§ 2512, bit.ly/VT_TreeWardenStatutes.

2. “Proposed Tree Warden Statutes Amendments,” Vermont Urban & Community Forestry, bit.ly/VTUCF_TreeWardenAmendments.

3. Vermont Urban & Community Forestry, *Guidelines for Public Hearings for Tree Removal*, bit.ly/VTUCF_PublicHearing.

4. “Tree Risk Management,” Vermont Urban & Community Forestry, bit.ly/VTUCF_TreeRisk.

5. “Storm Damage,” Vermont Urban & Community Forestry, bit.ly/VTUCF_StormDamage.

6. “Electrical Hazards Awareness Program,” Tree Care Industry Association, bit.ly/TCIA_EHAP.