

Checklist for Storm-Damaged Structures

Here are some tips for checking damaged structures and trees after the storm.

Check buildings for damage

Exterior

Make sure the building is not in danger of collapsing. Look for bulges, sways, leaning walls and sagging roof lines.

Check the roof as it is a very good indicator of the presence of structural damage. See if the ridge is straight (this is best viewed from a distance). If the ridge sags on the ends or in the middle, the load-bearing walls have shifted.

Check the walls to verify that they are vertical and straight. This can be done by eye or with a carpenter's level.

Check the structure where it meets the foundation. The plate should not be separated from the studding where the foundation meets the walls. On block foundations, inspect mortar joints to make sure the block with the plate bolt in it hasn't separated from the wall. On stone or concrete foundations, check to see that the plate bolts have not worked loose.

Check for cracks in masonry exteriors of the building. Look near the corners of the structures and under and around doors and windows.

If any of these indicators of structural damage are observed, call a professional contractor, architect or engineer.

Interior

Turn off any outside gas lines at the meter or tank.

Turn off the main electrical breaker until safe conditions are established. Even if power is out in your area, disconnect the main switch, fuse or circuit breaker. Use extreme caution in wet, storm-damaged areas. Stand in a dry spot when turning off electricity. If you have to step in water to get to the circuit or fuse box, call an electrician. Whenever possible use a dry stick to open panel doors and throw switches.



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Do not smoke or use a flame as a light source when first entering a damaged building.

Check for sagging ceilings. Wet insulation and pocketed water can cause ceilings to fall.

Check the framing. Look for ridge separation, loose knee braces and loose rafters where the rafters join the walls.

Inspect roofs for damage

Before getting onto a roof, inspect the rafters for breaks and sags.

Check for damaged or missing shingles. Check asphalt shingles for cracks at the butt end, where

they may have been weakened from flexing. Make sure individual shingles have not blown off. Thoroughly inspect shingles on the ridge, gable ends, and eaves.

On metal roofing, inspect the entire roof, especially the gable ends, eaves and ridge cap, for loose nails. If nails have worked loose, re nail them as soon as possible. If nails won't hold when hammered back in, use #12 or #14 metal screws to fill old nail holes (use aluminum screws on aluminum and steel screws on steel). Renail 3 to 4 inches away with ring or screw-type nails.

On a sunny day, check for potential leaks from inside the building with the doors closed. While looking for holes in the roof, inspect the ridge, gable ends, and eaves for possible structural separation.

Contact your insurance agent as soon as possible. Don't be in a hurry to settle your claim, however. Make certain that all damages and repairs have been identified.

Make temporary repairs as needed

Allow only a physically able person to go up on the roof. If the roof is sagging from structural damage, wait for a professional. A sagging roof may collapse.

Cover holes in the roof with boards, tarps, or plastic sheeting. If possible, place tarps or plastic around the ridge so rain rolls off. Secure plastic sheets or trash bags with strips of wood and fasten them down with duct tape. If the holes are large, support the plastic in the center to keep it from ripping from the weight of rain.

Cover holes in the walls or broken windows with tarps or plastic.



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