

LIGHTNING TALKING POINTS

- Lightning often accompanies thunderstorms and other types of severe weather.
- If you see lightning and hear thunder within 30 seconds, take shelter (vehicle, building, low spot away from tall trees, wire fences or other conductive objects.)
- Due to their height, trees are a prime target for lightning; stay a distance away that is twice the tree height.
- The most commonly struck trees are oaks, elms, poplars and pines – typically found in residential yards.
- Lightning damage to trees varies greatly:
 - When electricity is conducted along the outside of a tree, blown off bark and scarring will be apparent.
 - When lightning charge penetrates the tree's trunk, the compression and rebound of the trunk tissue from the lightning bolt splitting the air causes the tree to explode, leading to a serious condition called "trunk shatter."
- Operating a chainsaw on lightning-damaged trees is dangerous as internal structural damage might not be obvious; never operate a chainsaw alone or without proper instructions and safety equipment.
- Lightning strikes on pines and strikes that affect more than 30% of a hardwood tree's circumference generally will necessitate the removal of the entire tree. This reduces liability issues, further labor and continued tree problems. This may be an opportunity to replace the removed trees with a species more appropriate for the site with three new trees.
- Lightning strikes on hardwood trees that affect less than 30% of the tree's circumference can be managed depending on the species. Minimize stress, water, and wait one growing season to fertilize and prune. Monitor damage for pest attack.
- The GFC recommends homeowners only clean up minor tree damage.
- Contact a Certified Arborist for helping assess the health of a lightning-damaged tree.
- TO FIND A CERTIFIED ARBOIST VISIT THE GEORGIA ARBORIST ASSOCIATION WEBSITE AT GEORGIAARBORIST.ORG.