

West Suffolk Council Tree Management Policy

Appendix 1: Priority levels and response timescales

Immediate risk to public safety

Immediate risk of serious harm is a risk of such immediacy and consequence that urgent action is required.

In most cases, immediate risks are likely to be clearly observable in the course of informal or formal inspection and must be dealt with immediately.

Such intervention may be in the form of tree work, e.g. felling, or through site management. For example, where a large tree is found with an obviously lifting root plate or actively separating heavy branch within falling distance of a busy road, this may involve stopping or diverting traffic or felling, crown weight reduction or branch removal.

Most immediate risks have a reasonable likelihood of being identified by non-specialists and specialists.

Non-immediate risks posed by trees to public safety

Risk of serious harm in the near future is non-immediate and can be reasonably managed at an acceptable level by a planned, cost-effective response.

Action will be needed when inspections identify trees posing risks in the near future. Once identified, the response may involve prioritised treatment of the tree or site to manage the risk within the near future at an acceptable level, or further specialist assessment to clarify the extent of risk and treatment.

Risks not requiring a response in the near future

Where trees are identified as not posing a risk in the near future, there is no specific requirement for additional management. Existing informal and/or formal inspection procedures should be sufficient.

However, during a formal inspection, management requirements in line with best silvicultural practice (such as thinning out, crown lifting or crown balancing), or nuisance abatement (such as blocking of street lights and visibility splays), can be programmed in as and when resources allow, and at an appropriate priority level.

Response timescales

Response timescales will be based on the following priority ratings:

	Category	Description	Target timescale
Immediate risk to public safety	Emergency	Response to trees that are perceived as posing an immediate risk to public safety	24 hours
Non-immediate risks posed by trees to public safety	Urgent	Response to trees that are perceived as dangerous but not immediately so. Includes urgent work to be carried out at the earliest opportunity.	2 weeks
	Planned Red	Works on hazardous trees identified through routine inspection.	Within 12 weeks of inspection
	Planned Amber	Works on trees identified through routine inspection to reduce long term hazards.	Within 12 months of inspection
Risks not requiring a response in the near future	Planned Yellow	Work to abate or remove actual or potential nuisance caused by council trees if justified.	Within 12 months of inspection
	Planned Green	Work in line with best silvicultural practice and 'good neighbour' issues such as reducing encroachment over properties, where justified and resources are available.	Within 12 months of inspection