

West Suffolk Council Tree Management Policy
Appendix 10: Major incident plan

WEST SUFFOLK MAJOR INCIDENT PLAN
PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH TREES/TREE ENQUIRES

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1. BACKGROUND

The purpose of this document is to detail the response of West Suffolk Council to a major incident involving a large number of tree failures. Such trees may be in a dangerous condition; they may be blocking public highways - thus impeding emergency services; they may also be causing an obstruction on council owned land.

A 'Major incident', for the purposes of this document, is any event which leads to a level of tree failure requiring the dedicated efforts of a number of officers to resolve. In real terms this is likely to be a situation in excess of four incidents an hour. The great storms of October 1987 and January 1990 fall within these criteria. Lesser storms, which could result in a major incident classification, occur on average every two years.

West Suffolk's responsibilities with regards to trees in these circumstances are restricted to the following:

- 1) West Suffolk Council is not currently (as of January 2019) an agent of the Highways Authority and have not inspected the Highway tree stock for at least two years. That said if Suffolk County Council request the second tier authorities help in dealing with an emergency situation the second tier authorities will help them meet their statutory obligations wherever practicable.
- 2) West Suffolk Council has a duty of care responsibility to ensure that it does not expose visitors to any obvious danger. Park rangers will take the lead in determining whether the sites under their responsibility are closed/not opened. Prior to re-opening a site officers/senior rangers will undertake a visual inspection of the trees along key routes to ensure that there are no obvious dangers.

West Suffolk Council is not required to:

- 3) Remove or make safe trees located on private property - unless they obstruct or pose a threat to a dedicated public right of way, or have fallen from council-owned/maintained land.
- 4) Provide agreement for removal of trees protected by virtue of a Tree Preservation Order – it is incumbent upon the tree owner to show at a later date (if required) that the tree in question was dangerous and thus outside Tree Preservation Order legislation.

2. ORDER OF OPERATION

Emergency control centre:

Activated for the most serious incidents requiring multi agency responses when West Suffolk Emergency Plan is in effect



Line manager (parks operations manager or similar post)

- Liaise with Emergency Control Centre if West Suffolk Emergency Plan in effect.
- Liaise with other departments and agencies as required (road closures, building damage assessments, media statements).
- Represent the council at scene of tree related fatalities.
- Arrange site closures



Co-ordinating officer (arboricultural officer)

- Assess scale of incident in relation to a 10 hour period.
- Liaise with arboricultural contractors and establish resource requirements.
- Assess reported incidents and compile priority order.
- Communicate with the field officer listing incidents received, and suggested order of inspection.
- Issue works orders to in-house Landscape team.
- Track progress of works orders.
- Update information on incident sheet with inspection details provided by field officer, works carried out and status of works.
- Carry out five hour review of the emergency. Consider resources in light of this – including possible stand down times and rest periods.



Field officer (assistant arboricultural officer)

- Retain contact with the co-ordinating officer.
- Inspect and assess incidents as directed by the co-ordinating officer.
- Advise the co-ordinating officer as to the priority level of each incident and the resource requirements needed to resolve it.

Switchboard

- All tree related telephone calls should be directed to extension 7088.



Dedicated admin Role (Parks Operations)

- Record details of incidents on 'Major Incident – Trees – Message' form:
- A contact name
- A contact telephone number
- The location of the tree
- A brief description of the nature of the incident
- Collate incidents derived from telephone or passed message – giving each incident a unique number.
- Pass reports to the co-ordinating officer
- Receive from the co-ordinating officer completed works details to file for later settlement.



Note:

If an incident is recognised as being major, a dedicated administrative assistant will be seconded from the staff within the West Suffolk Council parks operation team. The assistant will have been previously identified and briefed as to their role.

3. Alternate Staffing

In the absence of key staff the most senior officer within the Parks Operations Team (Leisure Culture and Communities), will determine who the co-ordinating and field officers are. Options include:

Line manager

1. Most senior officer within Parks Operations Team

Co-ordinating officer

1. Arboricultural officer
2. Assistant arboricultural officer

Field officer

1. Suitably qualified member of the in-house Landscape team.
2. Parks infrastructure officer
3. Park rangers

4. Prioritisation

Works should be prioritised on the following basis:

1. Sites where trees have fallen and trapped members of the public.
2. Major arterial routes across the area, which link Fire, Police and Ambulance stations and local hospitals.
3. Other major arterial routes throughout the area.
4. Power supplies and blocked waterways.
5. Buildings.
6. Private drives and paths affected by council-maintained trees.
7. Bus routes.
8. Other highways locations.
9. Rights of way and access routes (including private drives and paths).
10. Public open space in residential areas.
11. Other parks and open spaces accessible to the public.
12. Private gardens affected by council-maintained trees.
13. Parks, cemeteries and other open spaces closed off to the public or where public access is likely to be very limited (e.g. woodland away from paths).

5. Staff Locations

Office based staff can be located in either West Suffolk House, Bury St Edmunds or College Heath Road, Mildenhall for the duration of the incident.

6. Out of Hours

West Suffolk Council out of hours team have lists of contact numbers for key staff and agencies involved in the management of trees during out of hours periods. These officers will make judgement calls as to when to draw in external contractors to help clear fallen trees/hung up branches.