

# HURRICANE HELENE

## STORM DAMAGE INFORMATION FOR LANDOWNERS



South Carolina  
**Forestry Commission**

# MANAGING YOUR HURRICANE-DAMAGED WOODS

## TECHNICAL & FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

### Safety

Many trees in storm-damaged areas have branches that may fall at any time, so be sure to wear a hard hat and stay out of the woods during windy conditions. Other hazards such as limbs on the ground are more prevalent following hurricanes, so use caution while walking in your woods.

### Contact a professional forester for assistance

For help in assessing the damage to your property, contact your local SC Forestry Commission forester (<https://bit.ly/4gMCfqF>) or a consulting forester (<https://bit.ly/3zuzfPd>). **Note:** SC Forestry Commission foresters have been receiving numerous requests for assistance, so there may be a waiting list for your county.

### Salvage removal

Some stands of trees were heavily damaged, but still contain enough healthy trees to continue to be managed for the long term. See the guidance below for advice on determining if you should retain an area or conduct a salvage harvest. If a harvest is needed, advice about selling timber can be found at <https://bit.ly/47K2eLr>.

### Replanting

In stands where damage was very heavy, a salvage harvest may be necessary. Harvesting these areas will provide some financial return and will help prepare the area for replanting.

### Cost-share assistance for reforestation, forest roads and firebreaks

Federal and state cost-share programs may be able to provide you with financial assistance if a forester has advised you to conduct a salvage harvest. You can apply for the USDA's Emergency Forest Restoration Program

(EFRP) if it appears likely that you will need to harvest and replant. Details about this program are available at: <https://bit.ly/3TQ6nrt>. You can sign up for EFRP at your local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office: <https://bit.ly/3XOl8MI>. Practices include repair of forest roads and stream crossings. For repair of fences and removal of trees from fields, you can sign up for USDA's Emergency Conservation Program (ECP): <https://bit.ly/3Z1d4Kk>.

Federal assistance is also available for reforestation and repair of roads on private forest land through the USDA's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) (<https://bit.ly/4eIrKTD>). You can sign up for EQIP at your local Natural Resources Conservation Program (NRCS) office - <https://bit.ly/3ZM7JHE>.

If federal funding is not available, you may want to apply for the SC Forestry Commission's Forest Renewal Program (FRP). Contact your local SCFC forester for an application: <https://bit.ly/4gMCfqF>.

### Tax considerations

Loss of timber from a casualty such as a hurricane may be deductible from your taxes if you have an established cost basis. Contact your accountant and/or consulting forester to see if you qualify for this deduction. Information about casualty loss is also available at: <https://bit.ly/3TRnskN>.





## Damage overview

Hurricane Helene caused varying degrees of damage to the forests across the state. Damage to trees ranged from “light,” where branches in treetops were broken, to “heavy,” where trees snapped off, were blown over, or lost most of their branches. Forest damage was highly variable across the affected area and depended on tree species, age, and whether the stand had been thinned recently or not. The level and extent of damage you sustained as well as your ownership objectives will help you determine what actions are needed to restore the health and productivity of your woods. The recommendations below are designed to provide you with basic guidance as you make decisions about the best course of action to follow.

**Note:** To ensure that you receive the highest price for your timber (even though the salvage value will be much lower than the normal price), you will need to try to obtain several bids if possible. Be sure to use a written contract as well. Many consulting foresters provide assistance with timber sales and can save you the headache and uncertainty of trying to carry out the harvest yourself - <https://bit.ly/3zuzfPd>.

## DAMAGE ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES

Below are some general guidelines that will help you determine the severity of the damage to your woods and assist you in deciding on your next steps.

**Flooded Trees** – young trees are likely to survive flooding if they are overtopped by water fewer than two weeks. Mature trees can usually tolerate flooding conditions for much longer.

### Pines

Damage to pine stands depended on the age, species, and past practices (thinned or not), but generally can be grouped into three categories:

**Light Damage** – stands in which less than 30 percent of trees are leaning more than 30°, were blown over, or had their tops broken. Salvage of damaged trees in these areas is usually not practical and may cause injury to remaining trees. All stands that fall into this light damage category need to be monitored for forest pest buildup and protected from wildfire.

**Moderate Damage** – includes stands in which 30 to 50 percent of the trees are leaning more than 30°, were blown over, or had their tops broken. If at least 100 to 300 healthy trees per acre remain, the stand will most likely recover on its own. Other stands with significant damage may warrant

salvage removal of affected trees, although this action is not critical. All stands of trees that fall into this moderate damage category need to be monitored for forest pest buildup and need to be protected from wildfire.

**Heavy Damage** – includes stands in which over 50% of the trees have significant damage. These areas need to be evaluated by a professional forester and may need to be harvested and replanted.

### Hardwoods

**Light Damage** – includes stands of trees in which less than 30 percent of trees were blown over or had their tops broken. In most cases, no action is needed in areas of hardwoods with light damage.

**Moderate Damage** – includes stands in which 30 to 50 percent of the trees were blown over or had their tops broken. If at least 100 to 300 healthy trees per acre remain, the stand will most likely recover on its own. Other stands with significant damage may warrant salvage removal of affected trees, although this action is not critical.

**Heavy Damage** – includes stands in which over 50% of the trees have significant damage. These areas need to be evaluated by a professional forester and may need to be harvested and regenerated.

### Points to remember

1. Practice safety first and foremost. Hazards are more numerous in storm-damaged woodlands than in unaffected areas.
2. Don't act hastily. Damaged pines retain value for up to nine months, so make sure that you seek the best price if salvage is deemed necessary.
3. Get professional advice. Growing timber is a long-term investment, so decisions made today can have long-lasting effects.

# WHOM TO CALL

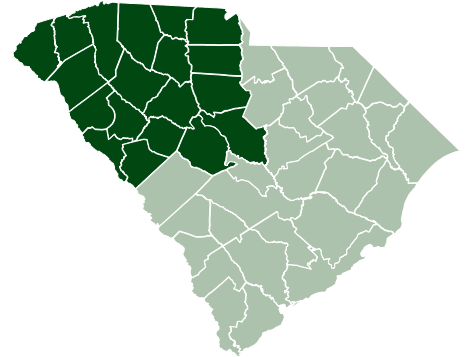
## AT THE SOUTH CAROLINA FORESTRY COMMISSION

### **Piedmont Region**

**Abbeville, Anderson, Edgefield, Greenville, Greenwood, Laurens, McCormick, Oconee, Pickens, Saluda, Cherokee, Chester, Fairfield, Lexington, Newberry, Richland, Spartanburg, Union, York Counties**

39 General Henderson Road, Newberry, SC 29108

(803) 276-0205

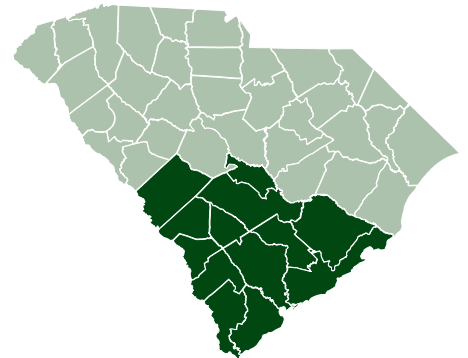


### **Coastal Region**

**Aiken, Allendale, Bamberg, Barnwell, Beaufort, Colleton, Hampton, Jasper, Berkeley, Calhoun, Charleston, Dorchester, Orangeburg Counties**

413 Sidneys Road, Walterboro, SC 29488

(843) 538-3708

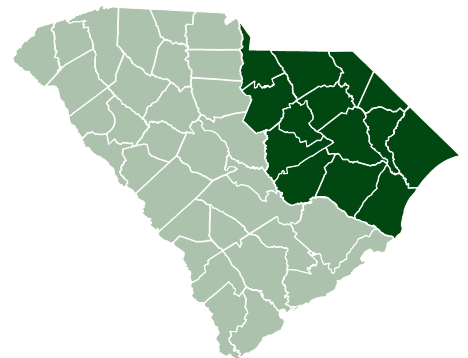


### **Pee Dee Region**

**Dillon, Florence, Georgetown, Horry, Marion, Williamsburg, Chesterfield, Clarendon, Darlington, Kershaw, Lancaster, Lee, Marlboro, Sumter Counties**

113 Forestry Commission Drive, Florence, SC 29501

(843) 662-5571



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