

Cracks Become Hazards in the Wintertime



As winter deepens, tree failure is a major cause of property damage. An ice storm or high wind can cause a cracked tree, that would normally appear safe, to become a very real hazard.

One of the major warning signs of tree failure is a visible crack. The vast majority of cracks are caused by improper closure of wounds, by the splitting of weak branch unions or by flush-cut pruning. Cracks can occur in branches, stems or roots. The wood behind the crack may be sound, decayed, or missing (cavity).

Several types of cracks can be found in trees and, like other defects, the severity of cracks ranges across a spectrum. Cracks are hazardous when they compromise the structure of the tree

by splitting the stem in two, or when another defect impacts the tree in such a way that it does not have enough sound wood in the outer shell to support the tree. The presence of multiple cracks and decay indicates a very defective tree.

Trees can usually withstand storms, but all trees can fail – and defective trees fail sooner than healthy trees. Fortunately, Embark's Certified Arborists are able to identify signs of tree weakness by measuring the shell thickness in a few locations around the tree's circumference, determining the width of the crack opening and looking for the presence of any other type of crack.