

AISD Tree Hazard FAQ

Austin ISD recognizes the importance of the urban forest as an asset that provides public health, environmental, and social benefits to students and our community. With thousands of acres of land, AISD has a rich and varied tree canopy that includes some of Austin's most notable heritage trees. Trees are living creatures that can get sick and die. To protect AISD students, staff, the community, and other healthy trees, AISD staff have created an FAQ to help identify if there is a dangerous tree on campus and provide information about tree maintenance.

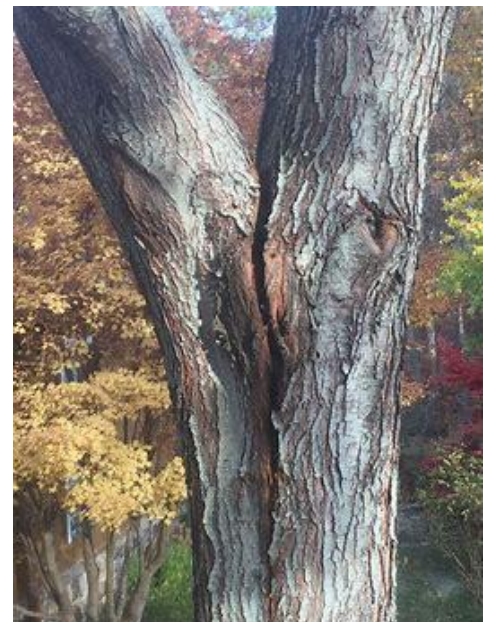
What is a hazardous tree?

A hazardous tree is one that can cause major damage to AISD facilities through failure (breaking apart), harm people using the space under and around the tree, or spread diseases to other healthy trees. Having trees around us entails accepting a certain level of risk. If there is a dead or dying tree on campus, don't panic; report it by creating a work order in Asset Essentials and selecting the problem category 'Tree Hazard.' Photos are required for review.

How can I identify a tree hazard?

Examples of trees hazards include things such as:

Large broken limbs in the canopy or cracks down the trunk of the tree.



Uneven soil on one side of the tree (soil heaving) and the tree leaning at a strange angle are signs of root failure and tree instability. Not all leaning trees are dangerous; some simply respond to light!



Bark peeling off in large areas of the trunk or multiple limbs. This can happen from physical damage to the tree. If there was no physical damage, it is often related to a disease.



Fungal growth/mushrooms on the trunk of the tree, base of the tree or limbs.



Trees with very few leaves or no leaves at the top of the canopy may indicate issues. Remember, in the fall, many trees lose their leaves (deciduous trees like pecans, red oaks, or sycamores). Sometimes trees take time after winter to 'wake up' and spread their leaves. However, if it is June, July, or August and there are very few leaves, it is likely that the tree has died. Sometimes only a portion of the tree will die, and the AISD Urban Forester will decide whether it is best to remove part of the tree or the whole tree.



I've identified a tree hazard on campus, now what?

If you are an AISD employee and you've identified a dangerous tree on campus, please follow these steps:

1. Don't panic! Many trees can remain standing for years, but AISD will work to address the issue as quickly as possible.
2. Create a barrier around the tree using red "danger" tape or another method to minimize pedestrian traffic in the area. If this is a drop-off or pick-up area, attempt to locate a temporary alternative.
3. Submit a work order under the category "Grounds" with the problem labeled as "Tree Hazard". Ensure you include photos of the entire tree and any clear signs of damage or stress for the quickest response. If you do not receive an email confirmation within 24 hours, please contact AISD Urban Forester Sydnie.Levell@austinisd.org.

I think there is a tree hazard, but I'm not sure. What should I do?

If you are an AISD employee and you believe there is a tree hazard on campus, please submit a work order. Select the work category 'Grounds' and specify the problem as 'Tree Hazard'. Include photos of the entire tree and any clear signs of damage or stress to expedite the response.

AISD Urban Forester Sydnie Levell will inspect the tree if it is not evident from the photos that it poses a danger.

I have a tree with a lot of branches over the sidewalk or building that needs to be pruned. Is it a "Tree Hazard"?

Please do not classify healthy trees with low branches as 'Dangerous trees'. These instances should be submitted as tree trim requests. While important, this type of work is not as high a priority as addressing large trees that are dead or dying. Below are some examples of tree trims that are not considered dangerous.



I see a tree with some dead branches in it, is it a Tree Hazard?

The size and location of the dead branch are key factors. Dead branches within canopies are not necessarily a cause for immediate concern. Depending on the size, location, and tree species of the branch with the dead branch, AISD will either address the issue promptly or put the request on hold to be addressed later. Please include multiple photos to assist with the assessment of the branch. The more photos of the branch and the entire tree, the better!

A branch fell and is now laying on the ground. Should I classify this as a tree hazard?

If a branch has already fallen and is completely separated from the tree and laying on the ground, this would be a “brush pick up” and not a tree.

Our campus had a tree removed, but some of it is still there? When will the contractor finish the removal?

This is a process called “snagging” a tree. To ensure timely addressing of all hazardous trees, these trees will be made safe by removing the dead or dying areas while leaving the trunk in place. This method, known as leaving a "snag," offers numerous environmental benefits for wildlife. [For more information about snags, you can follow this link.](#)

Our whole campus needs tree trimming and care! When will this happen?

Campus-wide or multiple tree trim requests will be de-prioritized. It's important to note that many trees across all AISD campuses require pruning and maintenance. Tree trimming and removal will be prioritized based on urgency, considering factors such as tree size, overall health, and location.

Resources and photo credits:

University of Florida – John Pronos, USADA Forest Service, Walter Reeves – The Georgia Gardener, Tree Shepherds, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension