

Tree Risk and Safety Management

Flood-stressed trees exhibit a range of symptoms including leaf-yellowing, foliage drop, leaf-size reduction, and trunk-sprouting.

Wind Throw now becomes our major safety concern for trees within and neighbouring to our school grounds. This is where a tree may fall over in strong winds, after the effects of soft ground from flooding.

Main Points

- Trees are recognised for their environmental importance and adding aesthetic value to the school grounds. However, severe weather can have a lasting impact on trees and cause significant damage to property and services.
- As part of schools' duty of care to students and providing a safe working environment, reasonable steps must be taken to ensure foreseeable hazards are identified and made safe.
- Schools are encouraged to schedule the assessment of tree health and condition into their occupational health and safety (OHS) risk register and post-holiday maintenance plan.
- Although it is not possible to eliminate the risk of a tree falling, there are often indications it may decline or have structural faults following potentially damaging weather. Trained inspectors can recognise many of these signs and have a qualified arborist investigate further.
- Schools should arrange for a **qualified and insured arborist** to complete an **annual inspection** of all vegetation in school yards or as recommended by an arborist's inspection report.
- The safe and appropriate management of trees is critical to ensure that a balance is maintained between safety and sustaining a healthy tree population with the benefits it provides.
- Some councils have general rules about pruning and removing trees, so schools should contact their local council or the Heritage Council of Victoria to find out if any trees at their school are protected.

Actions Required

- Schools are asked to include tree risk and safety management in their OHS risk register.
- Schools should engage a qualified and insured arborist to conduct inspections of high-risk trees as identified in the OHS risk register.

Additional Information

- Additional information about tree removal and replacement is available on the Department of Education and Training [website](#).
- For information on heritage-registered trees, visit the Heritage Council of Victoria [website](#).
- All tree inspections and maintenance should be completed according to Australian Standards. Schools should ask their arborist to explain how the proposed treatment meets the relevant standard.

Contact/Enquiries

- For further enquiries, please contact Penelope Irish, Property & Facilities Advisor, on 0429 473 351 or pirish@dobcel.catholic.edu.au.