

# Crews scatter across North Texas to begin cleaning up from storms

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By ROY APPLETON / The Dallas Morning News  
[rappleton@dallasnews.com](mailto:rappleton@dallasnews.com)

CARROLLTON – The whirr of chainsaws put an edge on Thursday across the Carrollton Heights neighborhood. At midday, the outbursts were most pronounced at Garry Sisco's house on Eric Street.

"It was such a beautiful thing," he said, as five workers carved away on the mammoth pecan tree sprawled across his lawn.

Hours after 75-mph winds and pounding rain stormed through the Dallas area, Mr. Sisco and others began assessing damage – and flooding tree specialists, fence builders and cleanup crews with calls.

"It's much worse than the average storm by far," said Steve Houser, an arborist for almost 30 years.

By late afternoon, his company, Arborilogical Services, had responded to more than 175 calls, compared with the two to four it handles on a typical day. The damage stretched from southern McKinney to North Dallas, particularly around the Dallas North Tollway and the Bush Turnpike, he said.

"We've had trees on houses, power lines and across driveways so people couldn't get out," Mr. Houser said.

At Duck Fence & Deck in Allen, owner Ron Sherwinski said he had 45 calls in his first hour of business.

Mr. Sisco's tree was more than 3 feet wide at its base and had shown signs of decay before the storms. On its way down, it damaged the roof and a wall of his study, tore off his patio awning and ripped away the bark of a second pecan.

He said he called three companies about the damage. "Then they came by looking for work," he said, watching Ramon Lechuga and his four helpers attack the tree.

Mr. Lechuga, a land excavator from Lewisville, said family members told him of the damage in Carrollton. He hooked a flatbed trailer to his pickup, grabbed a crew and responded.

"It's real slow, so we had to find what we could," said Mr. Lechuga, who was charging \$1,600 for Mr. Sisco's job. "We've got to eat."

He wasn't alone looking for work.

"They're like vultures," Suzanne Blackwood said of the independent crews that descended on her Far North Dallas neighborhood Thursday. "They are pretty smart to get out there and solicit business."

She said her street, Windtop Lane near Frankford Road, looked like a war zone.

"There were holes in houses; fences are gone," she said. "We had people's food from their garbage cans all over our yard."

A block away from Mr. Sisco's home, Ralph and Joyce Szabo grilled burgers on their back deck as they stacked tree limbs along the shady street. A sunny sky and gentle breeze offered no hint of the earlier storms.

Winds had uprooted a cedar tree that fell onto the rain gutter of their home on Rosemon Avenue. A wooden gazebo collapsed. Statues and urns were scattered about. Limbs torn from a towering elm lay on the ground or hung precariously in its canopy.

"We're very lucky," Mr. Szabo said. "Hail was pelting the house. You should have seen the lightning. It was the scariest thing we've ever been through."

Mr. Lechuga asked whether he and his men could climb the tree and remove the broken limbs. Mr. Szabo declined.

"He doesn't have insurance," he said. "And what if they get up there and drop them on my house?"