Red Flags That a Tree Near Your Home May Be Unsafe

A large tree close to your house adds shade, privacy, and character to your property. But a tree that looks healthy from a distance can hide serious problems that put your home, your family, and your neighbors at risk. Knowing what to look for helps you decide when a tree needs attention and when it can stay put. This article walks through the warning signs that a tree may be unsafe near your home, so you can evaluate the situation clearly and act before trouble arrives.

Why Regular Checks Matter

Trees are living things. They grow, they age, and they respond to weather, pests, and disease. A branch that held firm last year may weaken after a storm. Roots that anchored a tree for decades can rot after a wet season. The ground itself shifts with rain and drought, changing how a tree stands. Checking your trees once or twice a year, and after heavy storms, is a simple habit that can prevent costly damage.

Lean: When a Tree Starts to Tilt

A tree that leans may be perfectly natural, or it may be failing. The key difference is whether the lean is recent or has been there for years. A sudden lean, especially after rain or wind, suggests the root system has given way. Look at the base of the trunk where it meets the ground. If you see a raised mound of soil on the opposite side of the lean, that is a sign that the root plate is lifting. That kind of tree is unstable and can fall with little warning. A tree that has leaned since it was young, with roots that have grown into the ground on the downhill side, is usually safe. But any lean that changes course over time deserves a closer look.

Cracks and Splits in the Trunk

A crack in the trunk is not always serious. Some cracks are shallow and heal over. But a deep, vertical crack that runs a long way down the trunk, or a crack that goes all the way through the trunk, can weaken the tree to the point where it breaks apart. Look for cracks that are wide enough to fit a finger. Cracks that appear after a storm or a freeze are especially concerning. They may indicate that the tree has internal decay or that the wood is stressed. If you see a crack that extends into a branch union, the branch may be at risk of splitting off.

View the location on Google Maps

Deadwood: Branches That Have Died

Dead branches are common in many trees, especially older ones. A few dead twigs high in the canopy are not a problem. But large dead branches, or many dead branches throughout the tree, signal trouble. Deadwood is brittle. It can break off in a light wind and fall on anything below. Check the branches that hang over your house, driveway, or patio. If a branch has no leaves in the growing season, or if the bark is peeling away and the wood underneath is dry and cracked, that branch is dead. Removing deadwood before it falls is one of the most straightforward ways to reduce risk.

Decay and Fungus

Decay inside a tree is not always visible from the outside. But there are clues. Mushrooms or conks growing on the trunk or at the base are a clear sign that the wood inside is rotting. Fungal bodies release spores and feed on the dead or dying wood. If you see them, the tree has internal decay that may compromise its strength. Also look for cavities or hollows in the trunk. A hollow tree can stand for years if the remaining wood is thick enough. But a large cavity that takes up a significant portion of the trunk, especially near the ground, reduces the tree's ability to hold itself up. Pressing on the bark near the cavity with a blunt tool can tell you how much solid wood is left. If the bark feels soft or crumbles, the decay is advanced.

Root Problems: The Hidden Danger

Roots are the foundation of a tree. If the roots are damaged, the whole tree is at risk. Look for soil heaving around the base of the tree. That indicates that the roots are pushing upward, which can be a sign that the tree is starting to tip. Also check for roots that have been cut or damaged by construction, paving, or digging. A tree that has lost a large root on one side may not be able to hold itself upright in a storm. Soil saturation from heavy rain or poor drainage can also weaken roots. If the ground around the tree stays wet for days after a rain, the roots may be rotting.

Drop Zone: What Is Below the Tree?

Even a healthy tree can drop branches. The area directly under the canopy, and a little beyond, is the drop zone. If your house, car, or play area sits inside that zone, the risk is higher. A tree that overhangs a roof is a greater concern than one that stands alone in an open yard. Utility lines running through the canopy are another hazard. A falling branch can bring down a power line, causing an outage or a fire. Trees near utility lines should be inspected by a professional who knows how to work around live wires.

Ball Ground Tree Service offers on-site evaluations to help property owners decide whether a tree needs pruning, monitoring, or removal. Their team can assess the signs described here and give you a clear recommendation based on the tree's condition and location.

What to Do When You Spot a Warning Sign

If you see one or more of these signs, do not assume the tree is safe. A single crack or a small lean may not be an emergency, but it is worth a closer look. Start by taking a photo and noting where the problem is. Then consider the tree's size and proximity to your home. A small tree in the middle of the yard is less risky than a large tree leaning toward your bedroom. The next step is to call a professional for a tree safety evaluation. An arborist or a tree service can climb the tree, inspect the crown, and check the roots in detail. They can also advise on pruning, cabling, or removal.

When Removal Is the Only Option

Some problems cannot be fixed. A tree with advanced decay, a severe lean, or extensive root damage may be beyond saving. In those cases, removal is the safest choice. A professional can take down the tree in sections, minimizing risk to nearby structures. After the tree is down, stump grinding can remove the leftover stump so you can replant or use the space. Lot clearing may also be needed if multiple trees are causing problems on a property.

Ball Ground Tree Service is also on Twitter.

Ball Ground Tree Service also provides tree removal, trimming, emergency storm work, stump grinding, and lot clearing for residential and acreage properties in Ball Ground and Cherokee County, Georgia. They serve Ball Ground, Georgia 30107, Cherokee County, residential neighborhoods, gated communities, and rural acreage properties.

For a professional tree safety evaluation, contact Ball Ground Tree Service at +1 770-697-9222 or visit their office at Bldg 100, 2220 Airport Industrial Dr, Ball Ground, GA 30107.