

Recent storms have once again highlighted the need for landowners to be windblow aware and to know what to do in the event a storm damages their plantation. If you experience windblow, **the most important advice is not to rush into any decisions** but to make a step-by-step plan to minimise risk and maximise the salvage value of your plantation. Most forests, despite being blown, can have considerable timber value.

The following steps aim to assist forest owners in planning and harvesting their effected plantations:

1. **Think Safety** first! A windblown forest is a dangerous place. Only qualified and insured operators should be permitted access. All parties have legal obligations when carrying out forestry operations under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005:
https://www.hsa.ie/eng/publications_and_forms/publications/forestry/forestry_operations_code_of_practice_2024.pdf
2. If your plantation is insured for windblow, **contact your insurance company** immediately, notifying them of the damage.
3. Get **independent advice** from your Teagasc Forestry Adviser (Contact details for the local adviser in your County can be found at <https://www.teagasc.ie/staff/>) or from a Registered Forester, and any additional qualified professionals such as insurance advisors, taxation experts, etc. as appropriate. The DAFM website has a list of Registered Foresters:
<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/205869-list-of-registered-foresters/>
4. **Assess** the area, timber volume and likely value of the windblow in your forest. In addition, it is important to assess the adjacent area that has not blown. A decision will be required, considering factors such as age, area and risk of further windblow, whether to retain adjoining areas, allowing them to grow to normal clearfell age, or whether to harvest these areas together with the damaged area. Where a forest is partially windblown, it is important that a forestry professional assesses the remaining standing trees for stability. Where the forester deems trees or areas to be unstable, these should be included in the felling licence application.
5. Unless the area is covered by an existing clearfell licence you must **apply for a Felling Licence** from DAFM to fell/harvest the windblown timber, as well as any adjacent trees deemed at risk of further windblow. Notifying DAFM that the application relates to 'Storm Damage', will ensure it is prioritised. Guidance regarding felling licence applications can be found at:
<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/tree-felling-and-management/>
6. Consider **access to the forest** and specifically the windblown area. If necessary, apply for a forest road licence from DAFM. Guidance regarding roading licence applications can be found at:
<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/9d223-forest-road-scheme-2023-2027/>
7. Under the **Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005** there is an obligation on landowners to gather information about site hazards and to produce a site risk assessment together with a site hazards map.
8. **Market** the windblown timber and get professional advice on current prices. Joining a forest owner group to sell your timber could provide you with scale and increased efficiency. It may also reduce costs thereby maximising salvage value. Forest owner group contact details can be found by contacting Teagasc. Further information can be found at: <https://www.teagasc.ie/crops/forestry/advice/general-topics/forest-owner-groups/>
9. A **Timber Sales Contract** is important to protect the interests of all parties. Consult your Registered Forester regarding your timber sales contract. The Irish Timber Growers Association (ITGA) have produced a Template Timber Sales Agreement which is available on their website:
<https://itga.ie/services/information/sales-systems>
10. A **Timber Sales Dispatch System** is important for security and accountability regarding the movement of timber from the plantation. Your Registered Forester can provide advice on this aspect of the sale. A model Timber Sales Dispatch system is available on the ITGA website:
<https://itga.ie/services/information/sales-systems>
11. **Supervision and monitoring** harvesting operations will ensure compliance with best forest practice and the provisions of the felling licence.

12. **Close off the sale and record keeping** – This is important for accounting and tax, health and safety, various environmental and other obligations. Make sure all timber is accounted for, paid for and that proper records are maintained.
13. **Replanting plan** – Plan your harvest operation in conjunction with the subsequent replanting operation. A badly planned and implemented harvesting operation will potentially increase the replanting cost, and ground damage.

The above guidance and information concerns windblow events within a forest plantation, a separate guidance document, concerning the *Management of Roadside Trees* is also available from DAFM. Topics covered include responsibilities, checking trees for risk of failure, and Health & Safety. Appropriate management of roadside trees can prevent future incidents and unnecessary emergency work. The guide can be found at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/8fb45-a-guide-for-landowners-to-managing-roadside-trees/>.