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License Requirement for Tree Work Lifted Following Hurricane

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September 6, 2005

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The Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry is temporarily lifting the arborist licensing requirement for emergency tree work involving downed or broken trees.

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"We are talking about trees on houses, cars, driveways and other emergency type situations," Commissioner Bob Odom said. "It's simply the cutting and removal of downed or damaged trees, nothing more."

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The decision to temporarily lift the licensing requirement is carefully thought out following each storm.

"This is always a close call," Odom said. "We don't want to open our citizens up to shoddy work, but we're also realistic and we know there aren't enough licensed arborists in the state to complete all the work that must be done in a timely manner."

"We suspended the requirement for Andrew and Lili and now we're going to allow unlicensed tree cutters to take care of emergency situations in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina."

However, Odom advised homeowners to carefully supervise any tree work being done and not to pay for the work until the job is finished to the homeowner's satisfaction. The department will provide regulatory oversight.

"This is not for tree work necessary to repair, maintain or preserve a tree. This exemption is designed to apply only to emergencies."

Odom also strongly cautioned that no one but licensed arborists or utility company personnel are to work on downed trees on utility lines.

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