

Safety Sense

OPEI Offers Tips For Storm-Stressed Communities

(NAPS)—Hurricanes, tornadoes, floods and other storms can damage homes, businesses and communities. The Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI) offers tips to help everyone stay safe during cleanup and recovery efforts—and on how to be best prepared for when the next bad weather hits.

“The best time to get ready for a storm is before it hits. But even then, the ensuing cleanup can be taxing. It’s important to pay attention to safety and follow some simple protocols when recovering from storm damage,” says Kris Kiser, President and CEO of OPEI.

He offers the following to communities beleaguered by bad weather:

Figure out where to start. Survey property and damage, as well as safety risks such as downed power lines or unstable structures. Consider what will be needed to clean up. You might need a chainsaw, portable generator, pole pruner, water pump, or utility vehicle to get the job done.

Use safety gear. Sturdy shoes, safety goggles, hard hats, chaps, reflective clothing and work gloves can help protect people cleaning up from a storm.

Follow manufacturer’s directions for equipment operation. Operate equipment safely and follow directions from the equipment manufacturer for safe usage. Consult the owner’s manual and check online for it if the manual can’t be found. Make sure equipment works well and that safety guards have not been disabled.

Trim trees safely. When using equipment such as chain saws or pruners, keep both feet firmly on the ground, and observe the safety zone, which means keeping bystanders and power lines (those above you and any that might have fallen down) at least 50 feet away from your work area. If necessary, call a professional landscape contractor or tree care service for downed trees.

Use precautions with chainsaws. Always stand with your weight on both feet and adjust your stance so you are angled away from the blade. Hold the chainsaw with both hands. Never over-reach or cut anything above your shoulder height. Always have a planned retreat path if something falls. Be aware of potential chainsaw kickback, which may happen when the moving chain



Correct cleanup protocols can help you keep rough weather from shaking up your life.

at the tip of the guide bar touches an object, or when the wood closes in and pinches the saw chain in the cut.

Keep the right fuel on hand. Store fuel in an approved container. Use the type of fuel recommended by your equipment manufacturer. Use fuel with 10% or less ethanol in gasoline-fueled outdoor power equipment (for more information see www.LookBeforeYouPump.com).

Have the right batteries. Use only manufacturer-approved charging systems. If possible, have a couple of extra batteries on hand. Do not use off-brand batteries.

Ensure portable electric generators have plenty of ventilation. Generators should never be used in an enclosed area or placed inside a home or garage, even if the windows or doors are open. Place the generator outside and away from windows, doors, and vents that could allow carbon monoxide to come indoors. Keep the generator dry, and make sure you have adequate outdoor-rated extension cords. Before refueling, turn the generator off and let it cool down.

Operate water pumps with care. Never operate a centrifugal pump without water in the pump casing. A self-priming pump creates a partial vacuum by purging air from the intake hose and pump casing. All self-priming pumps require water to be added to the pump casing to start the priming process.

Drive utility vehicles (UTVs) with caution. Keep the vehicle stable and drive slowly. Do not turn the vehicle mid-slope or while on a hill.

Listen to your body. Storm cleanup can be draining. Do not operate power equipment when you are tired, drink plenty of water and take regular breaks.