

Tree Removal

The City of Shoreline regulates tree removal in the various situations. The following information is intended to educate property owners and contractors of the general requirements regarding tree removal. Please contact Planning and Development Services for specific regulations on each of these situations below. Development Code Section 20.30.290.370 contains most of what you need to know.

Trees in Environmentally Critical Areas

If a tree is near an area such as a stream, wetland, or steep slope, then the tree may be in a critical area or its buffer. City review is required to determine whether trees in critical areas or buffers may be removed or pruned through a Clearing and Grading Permit. To find out if your tree is in or near a critical area contact the City's Planning and Development Services office. See Development Code Section 20.50 and 20.80.

Exempt Zones of the City

The removal of trees on properties zoned Community Business, Regional Business, Industrial, Neighborhood Business, Office, or North City Business District is exempt from tree regulations unless the trees are located within a critical area or its buffer.

Hazardous Trees

Trees of a significant size must be determined as dangerous, unhealthy, and within striking distance of a habitable building to be considered hazardous. Hazardous tree removal may be allowed after submitting a Tree Evaluation Form to the City. This form must be completed by a certified arborist and submitted to the City before the tree is removed. If the threat is an active and imminent hazard to life or property the Director may verbally authorize immediate removal. Call (206) 801-2500 during business hours or (206) 801-2260 after hours to obtain approval. See Development Code Section 20.50.310.

Tree Pruning

Minor pruning is allowed without a permit for protected trees located outside critical areas and their buffers. Minor tree pruning does not include coppicing or the topping of tree crowns. Minor pruning in critical areas may be allowed with a Clearing and Grading Permit if the pruning meets tree removal and critical area regulations.

Tree Removal Outside of Critical Areas

Up to 6 significant trees that are outside critical areas and their buffers may be removed during a three year period. A "significant tree" is defined as:

Any healthy, wind-firm, and non-hazardous tree eight inches or greater in diameter at breast height if it is a conifer and 12 inches or greater at breast height if deciduous.

Unless located in a critical area or buffer, any number of non-significant (smaller) trees may be removed without a permit.

Tree Removal for Site Development

Tree removal is not allowed on a site for the purpose of preparing the site for sale or future development. The site must minimally retain 20% of existing significant trees excluding critical areas or minimally retain 30% of significant trees including all significant trees in critical areas. A Clearing Grading Permit is required if more than 3,000 square feet are to be cleared or if more than 6 significant trees are to be removed. Trees retained as a condition of a development plan must be protected and maintained for at least 3 years. See Development Code Section 20.50.350.