

Seattle Permits

— part of a multi-departmental City of Seattle series on getting a permit

Tree Pruning or Removal Permits

TREE PRUNING PROCEDURES

Seattle Municipal Code requires that all persons who prune and/or remove privately maintained trees within the public right of way area obtain a street use permit. The City Arborist office issues the permit.

A privately maintained tree is defined as any tree growing within the public right of way area that has not been planted by the City of Seattle nor is on the City's tree maintenance list to be maintained by the City of Seattle.

To obtain a permit, fill out the enclosed form and return it to the City Arborist office. If you are not the abutting property owner of the proposed work, you will need to include the signature of the adjacent property owner who will be affected.

The City Arborist or a representative will:

1. Visit the proposed work area to verify the extent and type of work to be done, including the types, number, and location of trees to be pruned or removed.
2. Require that all work will be done according to Seattle Transportation's Tree Pruning Guidelines and that all contracted work be performed by a qualified tree service company.
3. Tree pruning permits are free if no specialized equipment is used. However, a minimum deposit may be required. The deposit is refundable if the work has been completed to the City's satisfaction. The Arborist will use the following

criteria to determine when a permit fee and/or a minimum deposit will be required:

- In all cases where tree pruning or removal work is done in unopened rights of way, the Arborist will require a permit fee and inspection deposit.
- Where pruning or removal of trees on the planting strip requires specialized equipment or the services of a tree service company, a permit fee and larger deposit may be required, unless the tree service company uses equipment with a valid annual permit registered with our Street Use division. In such cases the Arborist may waive additional permit fees. However, a permit is still required for each individual job performed by the company.
- The Arborist may waive the permit fee if pruning or removing a tree does not require the use of any specialized equipment or the services of a hired person(s).
- If traffic lanes or streets must be closed, a traffic plan is required. The fee will not be waived for permits requiring a traffic control plan.

4. All permits issued for fee shall be picked up by the tree service company performing the work, or the property owner, at the Street Use Permit Counter located on the 23rd floor of the Seattle Municipal Tower, 700 – 5th Avenue.

The Permit Counter is open Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 8:00am until 5:00pm. On Tuesdays and Thursdays the office hours are 10:30am to 5:00pm. No permits are issued after 4:30pm.

5. The contractor or citizen will be required to maintain a safe work area and protect the public at all times. All tree removals must be flush to the ground, or the tree stumps must be ground to a minimum of six inches below grade. All debris

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must be cleared and removed from the right of way area.

All permitted work must be completed within 60 working days from start to completion of work. To initiate a Tree Pruning or Tree Removal Permit, please complete the attached form and return it to the City Arborist Office.

Please address all correspondence to:

City Arborist Office
Seattle Municipal Tower,
Suite 2300
P.O. Box 34996
Seattle, WA 98124-4996

TREE REMOVAL PERMIT APPLICATION PROCEDURES

1. Make an application for pruning or removal permit with the City Arborist's office. You may download an application form from our website at: <http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/treep pruning.htm> or have one mailed to you by calling the Urban Forestry Information line at 684-TREE (8733).

2. Meet the following conditions for removal.

- Tree must exhibit conditions which would merit removal. Nuisance or correctable conditions will not be considered reasons for removal. Nuisance conditions may include, but are not limited to, sidewalk conflicts, insect infestations, excessive leaf/fruit/litter drop, manageability under power lines, sewer conflicts, and/or blockage of light.
- Make appropriate neighborhood notification (extent determined by Arborist's Office).

The Arborist's Office can provide you with a draft notification form on request. In some situations, a tree may be posted with an informational sign in lieu of sending a notification letter to adjacent property owners.

- Send verification of notification to Arborist's Office – this should include addresses to which notification was made, date notification was made and nature of notification.
- Comment period. Removal permits may be denied as a result of negative neighborhood feedback.

3. Permit will be issued or denied:

If issued, the property owner or contractor of choice is responsible for picking it up and paying any necessary fees at the Street Use Permit Counter located on the 23rd floor of the Seattle Municipal Tower, 2300 – 5th Avenue.

The Permit Counter is open Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 8:00am until 5:00pm. On Tuesday and Thursdays the office hours are 10:30am to 5:00pm. No permits are issued after 4:30pm.

- If the tree removal permit is denied, you will be informed as to the reason(s) the permit was denied. If you like, you may submit additional information.
- **Tree replacement.** If the planting site meets minimum standards, the tree must be replaced. Replacement trees shall be a minimum of 1½ inch caliper, and shall be selected from the approved street tree list, or shall be approved by the City Arborist.

4. Stump removal. All stumps shall be removed to below ground level. Depth of removal will depend on proposed location of replacement tree.