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- ▷ [Home](#)
- ▷ [Local News](#)
- ▷ [Sports](#)
- ▷ [Opinion](#)
- ▷ [Northshore Life](#)
- ▷ [St. Tammany History](#)
- ▷ [Tourism](#)
- ▷ [World News](#)
- ▷ [Classifieds](#)
- ▷ [Place a classified](#)
- ▷ [Entertainment](#)
- ▷ [Health](#)
- ▷ [Stocks](#)
- ▷ [Archives](#)
- ▷ [About Us](#)
- ▷ [Email](#)
- ▷ [Subscribe](#)

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- [White Pages](#)
- [Meet Someone](#)
- [My Page](#)
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- [Movie Listings](#)
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- [Horoscope](#)
- [Greeting Cards](#)

## Slidell man killed Friday when tree falls on him

By Matthew Penix

St. Tammany News

SLIDELL - A Slidell-area man who grew up near St. Tammany bayous and gutted out Army Ranger Training, was killed Friday after he cut a toppled hurricane tree and it fell the wrong way, crushing him.

In what family members called a freakish accident, Richard Adam, 34, the father of a 4-year-old and husband of a pregnant wife due next month, was the sixth person to die from a hurricane-damaged tree since Hurricane Katrina roared inland four months ago, said Mark Lombard, St. Tammany Parish Coroner spokesperson.

With Adam's death, Lombard said, Katrina's potential for death still lingers on. He warned residents to use caution when removing tree debris or operating heavy equipment.

"Use extreme caution," Lombard said. "If you're not sure we always urge you to go to the professionals, but we understand and are sensitive to the fact that sometimes that might not be financially possible. That's just a big chance to take."

Adam was using a chainsaw about 5:30 p.m. Friday to cut down the 2-foot wide trunk about 3 feet from the bottom to make a safe environment for his child. The tall tree, whose core was hollow, likely fell in the direction opposite of what Adam intended.

"His wife was inside and she just heard a big thud," Lombard said. "She went outside and found him under the tree, barely moving."

Adam was taken to Northshore Regional Medical Center in Slidell, about five minutes from his home, where he died late Friday, Lombard said.

Just two days earlier, 68-year-old Margi Miller was found in the backyard of her Slidell home hours after her death, lying under a tree that fell while she was raking leaves, said Miller's daughter, Rachel Miller.

A friend became concerned when Margi Miller didn't answer the door to her home, said Rachel Miller. The friend ran across the street to find Margi's daughter, Elisha. Together they ran back to Margi's home and found her body underneath the tree.

Elisha's son tried to revive Margi with CPR, but she was already cold to the touch, Rachel Miller said.

Margi Miller, who had no insurance, had applied to the Federal Emergency Management Agency to pay for the tree removal, but was denied.



72

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She was waiting to clean up the debris in her yard until St. Tammany's burn ban was lifted, because she wanted to burn the refuse. She was likely killed just before dark, because she never went outside after dark, Rachel Miller said.

Larry Woodward, 65, was killed in November at his home on Chamale Drive in Slidell while cutting a downed hurricane tree with a chainsaw. The tree snapped back, hitting him in the head. He was found pinned on his left side, underneath the tree. Woodward died from blunt force trauma, Lombard said.

The youngest hurricane tree victim, Vincent Vertucci, a 14-year-old from Ponchatoula, was helping his cleanup hurricane debris when a weak tree snapped and fell, killing the boy, Lombard said.

Joseph Malifauskas, 40, of Jacksonville, Fla., also died while he was visiting St. Tammany to help with clean up removal when he cut a tree that again hit him in the head.

He died at Lakeview Regional Medical Center.

And just as Katrina slammed ashore on Aug. 29, the storm's fierce winds toppled a tree that fell and crushed Gary Hingle, 51, to death at his Slidell-area home.

An account was set up for Adam's children at Hibernia National Bank at 2925 Gause Blvd.

Adam was Salmen High School graduate who served in the Persian Gulf War in 1991. He was a native of the Bayou Liberty area.