When should a standing dead tree be left upright?
Whenever a standing dead tree does not pose a threat to human safety or a structure it is best to leave it standing. These “snags” are magnets for wildlife and keep contributing to the ecosystem for many years after they die.

What if a tree must be taken down for safety reasons?
Some dead trees must be taken down as a precaution, especially those along roads and trails, or near houses or places of business. In these cases, try to do the following, to the extent possible: (a) avoid damaging healthy trees and shrubs when taking the dead tree down, (b) leave the dead tree’s material in the forest, (c) place the main trunk down in a spot that does not trample any unique wildflower patches or block water flow.

How should I determine if a tree poses a threat?
When in doubt, a professional arborist should always be consulted. The International Society for Arboriculture has developed a list of considerations for potential hazard trees in both urban and rural settings. These are available through their website at www.treesaregood.com/treecare/hazards.aspx.