Tree Mortality – Placer County

Know who is responsible for dead or dying trees
In most cases, dead or dying trees on private property are the responsibility of the property owner. If property owners are unfamiliar with tree harvesting practices, landowners should consult with a licensed professional forester or arborist. Local, state and federal governments, and utilities may remove trees from both public and private land if those trees pose a hazard to their infrastructure (roads, buildings, power and water conveyance systems, etc.).

Placer Resource Conservation District – Landowner Assistance & Chipper Program
Contact the Placer County Resource Conservation District. They can provide technical assistance to property owners on tree management. The district also manages the county’s chipper program, which provides a low-cost curbside chipping service to help landowners reduce fire hazards by both creating defensible space and converting large brush piles for burning into small biodegradable chips useful for mulching or landscaping.

Quickly remove dead and dying trees
Dead trees need to be removed. They are a fire hazard because they are fuel for wildfires. Once a tree is dead, the beetles are no longer present. Standing dead trees will rot, becoming unstable, and will eventually fall. Dead trees can fall on people, homes, buildings and infrastructure, such as power lines. The sooner a tree is removed the better. The more it rots, the more unstable it becomes. For larger trees located near houses and other infrastructure, foresters and arborists prefer to remove them in pieces. However, if the tree is too rotten, it is unsafe to climb and difficult to predict where it will fall.

Learn how to identify trees infested with the bark beetle. Infested trees can generally be identified by pitch tubes, or holes that leave sawdust at the base of the tree. See this link for more information: [http://www.readyforwildfire.org/Signs-of-Bark-Beetle-Infestation/](http://www.readyforwildfire.org/Signs-of-Bark-Beetle-Infestation/)
Infested trees should be cut down and cut into pieces. The pieces should then be covered with plastic, chipped, and/or burned to kill the beetles. It is important to identify, remove and treat the infested trees in the “transitional area” (between dead trees and healthy trees), so as to minimize further spread into healthy forested areas.

Thin remaining forestland
If you haven’t already, now is the time to thin all of the forested areas of your property. Forests should be thinned so that there is 30-40 feet between trees, and the majority of the underbrush has been removed. This will improve the health of the remaining tree and allow them a better chance of survival against drought, beetles, fire, and other issues. It is best to do any thinning, falling, or other tree removal activities in the winter, so as to minimize the chance of attracting pests and diseases.
**What to do with the downed timber**
If you have a significant number of dead/dying trees, you may want to see if you can sell them to at least cover the cost of logging and transportation. There are still a few buyers for these logs. Dead trees begin to decompose within 3-6 months, at which time they lose their marketability. There are a number of possible permitting options available for removing dead trees – see more information here: [http://www.fire.ca.gov/resource_mgt/resource_mgt_fuelhazardreduction](http://www.fire.ca.gov/resource_mgt/resource_mgt_fuelhazardreduction)

If you do not want the felled timber for firewood, we recommend masticating, chipping, burning, or otherwise breaking down the material and incorporating it back into the soil.

For large amounts of woody biomass, one option for disposal could be the Rio Bravo Biomass Facility in Lincoln. Contact Fuel Manager Eric Olsen at eolsen@rbrocklin.com or 916-645-3383 ext.15. They can help you determine if the transportation costs make economic sense.

The County Tree Mortality Task Force is also working to identify drop-off locations where landowners could dispose of unwanted woody biomass. Please continue to check their website for updates.

**Reforestation**
Landowners should consider reforesting any areas where all trees are removed. This is to prevent soil erosion, and to retain a forested landscape. If trees are not replanted, the land will likely convert to brushland. If landowners are eligible, cost-share programs can assist with reforestation. Some factors to consider for reforesting are:

- Plant 220-300 trees/acre
  - Note: if you are reforesting commercial timberland, your RPF will recommend a higher planting rate
- Plant a diversity of species, such as cedar, fir, giant sequoia, pine
- It takes about 18 months to grow seedlings
- Seedlings can be ordered from El Dorado RCD at: [http://www.eldoradorcd.org/nodes/info/reforestation.htm](http://www.eldoradorcd.org/nodes/info/reforestation.htm)

**Dead Trees Near County Infrastructure**
Placer County has a contractor, Mtn. G. Enterprises, that is actively marking trees within 100 feet of county infrastructure to be removed within the next 12-18 months. County infrastructure includes county roads (roads must be both owned and maintained by the county), county buildings, county parking lots, but not utility lines or ditches. If you have received a right of entry form, or have specific questions about the marking and removal of trees, contact MGE at 1(916)438-9542.

- Learn more by visiting the Placer County Tree Mortality webpage at: [http://placer.ca.gov/trees](http://placer.ca.gov/trees)

**Hazard Trees Near PG&E Lines**
As part of their ongoing maintenance work, PG&E will continue to identify trees that are hazardous to their lines and cut them down once the landowner is notified. The landowner is then generally responsible for dealing with the downed tree. PG&E is working towards expanding the fire safe zone along their transmission lines by 2020. This will include clearing vegetation on 15-feet of both sides of transmission lines.
PG&E is also operating an Expanded Debris Management (EDM) program to address the growing number of dead and dying trees. Trees that qualify for this program must meet the following criteria:

- Dead/dying trees that pose a hazard to PG&E’s powerlines
- Located within 50 feet of a permanent structure or road
- Area must be accessible by contractor
- Property owner must provide consent by signing the EDW form, which authorizes PG&E to remove the trees from the property

Then, the hazard trees will be cut down by PG&E contract crews, and the wood will remain on site until another debris management contractor returns to remove it. This could take 1 to 3 months depending on the backlog of locations.

**Dead Trees on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Land Adjacent to Private Property**
Dead/dying trees on BLM land that pose a hazard to adjacent private property may be removed via a firewood permit. The firewood permit costs $25/cord of wood and can be obtained by visiting the BLM office in El Dorado Hills:

**Dead Trees on U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Land Adjacent to Private Property**
Dead/dying trees on USFS land that pose a hazard to adjacent private property may be removed via a firewood permit. The firewood permit costs $15/cord of wood, requires a $30/2 cord minimum, and can be obtained by visiting a USFS office or online at:
http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/tahoe/passes-permits/?cid=stelprdb5212195

**Cost-Share Assistance**
There are two main cost-share programs available to forestland owners:
1) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
2) California Forestry Incentives Program (CFIP) through the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE).

These programs will not cover tree removal or any forestry work in the 100-feet defensible space zone around a home, because that area is the landowner’s responsibility to keep clear via the Public Resources Code 4291: “Clearance Around Structures.”

**Possible Funding for Hazard Tree Removal for Very Low Income Homeowners**
USDA Rural Development may have funding to assist with hazard tree removal for very low income homeowners in rural areas. Please see the “Rural Development 504 Factsheet” for the program summary, and “Rural Development Income Limits” for income eligibility.
The key eligibility criteria are:
- Must own home and land in rural area (cannot be farm or ranch)
- Must occupy the home
- Must be inside the “Very Low Income” bracket (see attachment “Income Limits”)
- Funds must be used for “Health & Safety” purposes
- Loans:
  - Applicants must show credit worthiness
- Must show repayment ability to repay loan based on monthly budget cash flow
- Terms: Up to $20,000 at 1% fixed interest for a maximum term of 20 years.
- Deed of Trust taken if loan exceeds $7,500.

**Grants:**
- Applicants must be 62 or over
- Applicants' monthly budget cash flow shows that they cannot repay a loan.
- Lifetime maximum grant limit is $7,500.