

# County of El Dorado



## Tree Mortality Hazard Tree Removal Plan

The County of El Dorado Board of Supervisors proclaimed a Local State of Emergency due to drought conditions on October 21, 2014, and has renewed it every 30 days as required by the California Emergency Services Act, Article 14 §8630(c). Four years of extreme drought have made trees susceptible to an epidemic infestation of bark beetle. The conditions of extended drought and bark beetle infestation have resulted in pervasive tree mortality throughout the County of El Dorado and the State of California. Data collected by state and federal agencies demonstrate that due to drought conditions and bark beetle infestation, over 29 million trees in the State of California are dead and that tens of millions more are likely to die over the next five to six years.

On March 28, 2016, the Board of Supervisors proclaimed a Local State of Emergency due to extensive tree mortality throughout the County of El Dorado and has renewed it every 30 days as required by the California Emergency Services Act, Article 14 §8630(c).

There are several tools the County of El Dorado will employ in approaching the removal of hazard trees that threaten public infrastructure and public safety.

**Core Planning Team – First Meeting – April 15, 2016**  
**Second Meeting – May 10, 2016**

Role: Assist in the development of operational plans, resource sharing, regulatory oversight and facilitation.

Initial Task: Develop “Tree Mortality Hazard Tree Removal Plan” for County of El Dorado and initial strategies to implement the Plan.

Participants include:

- County of El Dorado Chief Administrative Office
- County of El Dorado Air Quality Management District
- County of El Dorado Community Development Agency
  - Departments of Transportation, Planning Services, and Environmental Management
- County of El Dorado Department of Agriculture
- County of El Dorado Information Technologies
- County of El Dorado Office of Emergency Services (OES)
- County of El Dorado Surveyor’s Office – GIS Program
- California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)
- California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES)
- United States Forest Service (USFS) - Eldorado National Forest
- El Dorado County Fire Chiefs Association
- El Dorado County Fire Safe Council
- El Dorado County/Georgetown Divide Resource Conservation District
- California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)
- PG&E
- Local Registered Forester
- Local Licensed Timber Operator

The Core Planning Team will consist of decision makers from each of the agencies listed as participants in the Core Planning Team. This will allow for the utmost efficiency when creating operational plans for countywide implementation.

## Tree Mortality Task Force

Role: Forum for information sharing/gathering and the coordination of plans and resources. Proposed to meet once each month, this Task Force will provide a venue for the county, cities and special districts to discuss needs, concerns and resources with representatives from local, state, and federal agencies who have the necessary expertise and experience to offer guidance throughout the process.

Recommended participants to include the Core Planning Team, when appropriate, and:

- AT&T
- California Conservation Corps (CCC)
- California State Parks Gold Fields District
- City of Placerville
- City of South Lake Tahoe
- Comcast
- El Dorado County Office of Education
- El Dorado Disposal
- El Dorado Irrigation District
- Fire Prevention Officers Association
- Georgetown Divide Public Utilities District
- Liberty Utilities
- Local Associate Fire Safe Councils
- Local Insurance Business/Agent
- Sacramento Municipal Utility District
- Shingle Springs Band of Miwok Indians
- Sierra Pacific Industries
- US Bureau of Land Management
- US Bureau of Reclamation

## **Sub-Groups**

Role: Communication, coordination and resource sharing.

To be created on an as needed basis and for limited duration.

- Homeowners' Associations
- Community Service Districts
- Zones of Benefit
- Chambers of Commerce
- Local Grange Organizations
- Local Water Districts
- Local Timber/Tree Falling Companies
- Local Firewood Companies
- Mills
- Coordination of Volunteer & Inmate Crews

## **Education & Outreach**

Role: Provide information and assistance to private landowners.

A webpage dedicated to tree mortality will reside on the County of El Dorado's web portal. The types of information to be provided on this site will include:

- County Resolution 053-2016 Proclaiming a Local State of Emergency
- Governor's Executive Order on Tree Mortality and Authorizing CDAA
- FAQ's
- Information and Updates Provided by State Tree Mortality Task Force
- Information and Updates Provided by County Tree Mortality Task Force
- Informational Brochures/Handouts
- Links to Essential Sites
- Contact Information
- List of Licensed Timber Operators (Tree Removal Companies)
- List of Registered Foresters
- List of Licensed Arborists
- AQMD Burn Information-Outdoor Burning

Additional outreach and education will take place utilizing local media outlets such as:

- Mountain Democrat
- Georgetown Gazette
- Sacramento Bee
- Tahoe Tribune
- KFOK

The County can also conduct outreach and education utilizing:

- County of El Dorado Information Email Subscription Program
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Email Contacts/Distribution Lists Provided by Stakeholder Representatives

Community forums were an effective tool in communicating with residents during past emergencies and will be employed once jurisdictional plans are finalized.

### **Role of All Local Governmental Agencies**

Individual local governmental agencies must apply for California Disaster Assistance Act (CDAA) funds independently of the County, and each local governmental agency is responsible to develop its own specific plan based on what their governing Board desires to accomplish and within their jurisdictional authority. Local governments include counties, cities, special districts, and tribal governments. It is important for the Board and the community to understand that the application for CDAA funds and the way in which each agency implements their plan is between that agency and Cal OES.

Tribal governments within California are not eligible to receive CDAA funding directly; however, should a local tribal government need assistance with identifying, removing, storing or disposing of dead and dying trees in response to a threat to the public right-of-way and/or public infrastructure, and the assistance is requested from an eligible applicant (i.e. county, city), that applicant may seek reimbursement for eligible activities performed on behalf of the tribe.

While each individual local government agency must independently apply for CDAA funds and develop their own specific plans, the County of El Dorado will work cooperatively with other local governmental agencies within the County on the sharing of resources and planning efforts in order to provide for the successful coordination of

cost efficient hazard tree removal projects that protect the public and prevent public infrastructure and asset damage.

## **Hazard Tree Removal on County Owned and Maintained Properties**

The County of El Dorado Division of Transportation and the County Facilities Division are tasked with the identification and removal of dead and dying trees that threaten the County's infrastructure and assets. As the number of dead and dying trees continues to increase, the County has developed a process to identify the dead and dying trees that threaten the County's infrastructure, assets and public safety, and will work with the appropriate agencies and resources including, but not limited to, those identified in this Plan, for hazard tree removal and processing.

Public safety and the continuity of essential services (including but not limited to electricity, water, communications, and roads) are of primary concern. Therefore, the County's resources will be focused in the following areas:

- County Maintained Roads
- County Facilities, Buildings and Grounds
- County Parks and Trails
- County Airports
- County Cemeteries

The County will work cooperatively with utility, communication and transportation agencies that have infrastructure located within the County on the sharing of resources and planning efforts in order to provide for the successful coordination of cost efficient hazard tree removal projects that protect the public and prevent public infrastructure and assets damage.

The County of El Dorado will assess all County owned and maintained infrastructure for dead and/or dying trees that threaten county infrastructure. Registered Professional Foresters (and/or licensed Arborists) will inspect trees and designate trees for removal. Visually dead trees (brown from top to bottom) will be marked and pictures taken to document mortality. A GIS mapping system is being developed that will utilize GPS locators for each worksite.

The County Division of Transportation will assess all County roads and will prioritize and categorize County roads as outlined below:

- Priority 1 – Major Collectors
- Priority 2 – Minor Collectors
- Priority 3 – Local Collectors

Tree mortality is documented throughout the County of El Dorado, from the lower elevations and up into the Tahoe Basin. The County's initial assessment efforts will include County roads within the High Hazard Zones, as defined by the State of California Tree Mortality Task Force, and all County properties that have infrastructure.

## **Private Property**

Hazard trees located on private properties that threaten public rights-of-way or public infrastructure, will be assessed and removed upon securing landowner approval provided by a signed right-of-entry permit ("Permit"). By signing the Permit, landowner allows access and entry to property to the State of California, the County of El Dorado, and their agents, officials, employees, and/or volunteers, contractors and subcontractors, subject to all licenses, easements, encumbrances, and claims affecting the premises. The owner grants County a right-of-entry ("Permit") over the premises for the purpose of inspecting the premises for dead and/or dying trees, testing materials on the premises, removing and/or clearing trees, hauling and/or disposing of trees, subject to the terms set forth in the Permit. No inspection, removal or clearance of trees will take place until Permit is signed. The owner must also agree and understand that the County and/or its agents may sell the felled trees and hereby waives any and all rights, actions, claims, in law or equity as to the value of the said trees in exchange for the services provided pursuant to the Permit. Hazard trees located on private properties that do not threaten the public right-of-way or public infrastructure, are not eligible for the reimbursement of removal costs under Cal OES/CDAAs guidelines. The County, working with the Tree Mortality Task Force, will support efforts to identify and apply for opportunities that can fund projects designed to assist private landowners.

## **Removal and Disposal of Trees, Slash and Wood Products**

Removal and disposal of wood products is one of the most difficult aspects of the hazard tree removal process as resources are very limited. The County, working through input provided by the Core Planning Team and Tree Mortality Task Force, will identify local resources to assist in the removal, storage and disposal of trees and slash. This **could** include:

- Local Tree Service Companies
- Local Timber Operators
- Private Mills
- Sierra Pacific Industries
- CAL FIRE Equipment
- CAL FIRE Growlersburg Camp
- California Conservation Corps
- El Dorado County Fire Safe Council (chipping)
- Locations to Use for Lumber Storage and Sorting
- United States Forest Service
- California Department of Parks and Recreation

The County, in coordination with the Task Force, will determine if there are local facilities that exist and are able to accept wood products.

Per the Governor's Executive Order signed on October 30, 2015, County staff will work with Caltrans and CAL FIRE in the identification of equipment such as commercial chippers, masticators, and air curtain burners that can be made available for use. It is understood that CAL FIRE will endeavor to provide a list of locations for storage locations for removed trees and that Caltrans is assessing their needs for woodchips and mulch that can be used locally.

Meetings with local tree removal companies, haulers and small mill sites will be scheduled to determine capacity for potential contracts.

The County will consider a competitive bidding process to develop contracts with local companies that specialize in all aspects of tree removal, inclusive of consulting on process, project management and coordination, management of sites designated to receive wood product, and rental of equipment. Any proposed contract(s) for service that results from this process will require the review and approval of the Board of Supervisors.

### **Tree Removal and Processing - Labor**

The County will meet with representatives from CAL FIRE and the California Conservation Corps in an effort to determine if contracts for use of inmate and volunteer crews can be developed. These crews offer a cost effective manner in which to provide labor for removing small trees, limbing trees that have been felled, bucking up logs, debris clean up, and feeding chippers and air curtain burners.

### **Requests for Vegetation Processing Equipment**

The County will consider and explore the feasibility of developing a request to Cal OES and/or CAL FIRE to obtain and use vegetation processing equipment, including air curtain burners, chippers and tub grinders to dispose of slash, small trees, limbs, branches, and pine needles. Locations will need to be designated to receive slash and other wood products. Local crews will be used to maintain these designated sites. The use of inmate and volunteer crews will need to be discussed in greater detail with CAL FIRE, the California Conservation Corps and County Risk Management.

### **Request for Equipment**

The County will communicate with the Resources Allocation Working Group of the State Tree Mortality Task Force to provide notification and facilitate the scheduling of equipment needed to expedite the removal of tree waste.



## **Potential Revenues Generated by Wood Product**

Revenues received by the County that are generated from the sale of wood and wood products would be considered a credit and will be subtracted from the eligible CDAA funding amount; and therefore, could not be used to offset the local match. Any and all revenues generated from wood product salvaged from private property is waived, by the landowner, in exchange for the emergency work provided pursuant to the Right-of-Entry Permit signed by the land owner.

The County of El Dorado, in collaboration with CAL FIRE, utilizing the resources provided by the State Tree Mortality Task Force, has developed an initial project map to guide the County's efforts to locate and document hazardous trees. This initial map is a working document that will guide the development and coordination of specific treatment projects. Due to the dynamic nature of the tree mortality disaster, maps are evolving and expected to be revised on a regular basis.