

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION



State of California
The Natural Resources Agency
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

PROJECT TITLE	Mount St. Helena Shaded Fuel Break		
PROJECT LOCATION	Township 9N, Range 7W, Sections 1, 2, 11, 12, 14, and 23; and Township 10N, Range 7W, Sections 35 and 36, Mount Diablo Base and Meridian (38° 38.347, -122° 35.898)	COUNTY	Napa
LEAD AGENCY	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)		
CONTACT	Megan Scheeline, Forester I		
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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) is planning a shaded fuel break project along Highway 29 over Mount St. Helena in Napa County. This route is the main connection between Lake and Napa Counties and is traveled by more than 7,000 cars daily. Creating a shaded fuel break will alter the volume, type, and continuity of vegetation which will change the behavior of a potential wildfire entering the zone. Brush, shrubs, and small trees will be removed in order to eliminate fire ladder fuels and increase spacing between tree crowns. The reduced fuel zone will lessen the chance of a fire starting and increase the likelihood that crews would be able to extinguish a fire before it could spread to the upper tree canopy and become a large, damaging fire. The fuel break along Highway 29 is the number one priority project in CAL FIRE's Sonoma-Lake-Napa Unit because of its potential to reduce fire intensity, reduce the number of fires started, provide a safer escape route for the public in the event of a fire, and provide a safer place for firefighters to combat a fire. The vegetation type in the project vicinity consists of dense trees and shrubs interspersed with grassy oak woodland areas. Dominant species include Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), valley oak (*Quercus lobata*), coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*), California bay laurel (*Umbellularia californica*), madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*), coyote brush (*Baccharis pilularis*) and manzanita (*Arctostaphylos* spp.). There are scattered gray pines (*Pinus sabiniana*) on the south side of the mountain and Ponderosa pines (*Pinus ponderosa*) on the north side of the mountain. Project activities will consist of removal of brush, shrubs, and small trees up to 6" diameter by hand crews. Cut material will be chipped or piled and burned for disposal. The maximum distance that the fuel break will extend on either side of the highway is 100 feet from the edge of pavement.

EXEMPTION STATUS

- Categorical Exemption Type/Section: Class 4 §15304
Minor Alterations to Land
- Statutory Exemption (state code section):
- Ministerial (§21080(b)(1); 15268)
- Declared Emergency (§21080(b)(3); 15269(a))
- Emergency Project (§21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c))

REASONS PROJECT IS EXEMPT

This project fits the description for a Class 4, §15304 – Minor Alterations to Land Categorical Exemption to CEQA. Field review by CAL FIRE staff confirmed that no exceptions apply which would preclude the use of a Notice of Exemption for this project. The project consists of minor treatments to land and vegetation consisting of removal of brush and small trees by hand crews using chainsaws and pile burning of that material. The activities will not result in the taking of endangered, rare, or threatened plant or animal species, or sedimentation to surface waters. CAL FIRE staff has concluded that no significant environmental impact would occur to aesthetics, agriculture and forestland/timberland, air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, geology and soils, greenhouse gas emissions, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, land use planning, mineral resources, noise, population and housing, public services, recreation, transportation/traffic, or to utilities and service systems.

DATE RECEIVED FOR FILING




Duane Shintaku, Deputy Director
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

4/23/15
Date