



Office of Emergency Services County of Tuolumne

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Tree Mortality Hazard Tree Removal Plan

The Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors proclaimed a Local State of Emergency due to drought conditions in February 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 created cascading effects to the residents of Tuolumne County such as failing wells and pervasive tree mortality. It is estimated there are over 29 million dead trees in California and this number continues to grow. As a result, the Board of Supervisors proclaimed a Local State of Emergency on September 15th, 2015.

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

Core Planning Team – First meeting Dec 9, 2015

Role: Assist in developing operational plans, resource sharing, regulatory oversight and facilitation.

Participants include:

Tuolumne County OES	PG&E
Tuolumne County Roads Dept.	Cal Trans
Cal Fire/County Fire	Cal OES
US Forest Service	Tuolumne Utilities District
Hwy 108 Fire Safe Council	Groveland CSD
Yosemite Fire Safe Council	

The Core Planning team will consist of decision makers from each of the agencies listed above which will allow for the utmost efficiency when creating operational plans county wide.

Tree Mortality Task Force – First meeting October 8, 2015

Role: Forum for information sharing/gathering and coordination of plans and resources. This monthly meeting will create the venue for county, city and special districts to discuss needs, concerns and resources with local, state, and federal regulators as well as the Fire Safe Councils who have the necessary expertise and experience to offer guidance throughout the process.

Participants include:

Tuolumne County AG Commissioner	American Wood Fibers
Tuolumne County Roads Dept.	Natural Resources Conservation Svcs.
US Forest Service-Stanislaus	City of Sonora
Highway 108 Fire Safe Council	U.S. Dept. of Agriculture
Yosemite Foothills Fire Safe Council	Me-Wuk/Sugar Pine Fire Dept.
PG&E	Sierra Resource Management
AT&T	Chicken Ranch Tribal Council
Comcast	Cal OES
Cal Trans	South West Inter Face Team
Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians	Tuolumne County Sheriff Office
Tuolumne Utilities District	Tuolumne County Fire Chiefs' Ass.
Twain Harte CSD/Fire Dept.	Hetch Hetchy Water and Power
Groveland CSD/Fire Dept.	State Parks
Lake Don Pedro CSD	Farm Advisor (UC Davis Cooperative Extension)
Tuolumne County Office of Education	BLM
Ultra Power Chinese Camp	
Sierra Pacific Industries	

Sub-Groups

Role: Communication, coordination and resource sharing

Homeowner's Associations
Community water companies
Local timber/tree falling companies
Mills (SPI, Ultrapower, American Wood Fibers)
Inmate crew coordination

These groups will be short lived and created on an as needed basis.

Education & Outreach

An important role County OES fulfills is education and outreach. With regard to the tree mortality emergency, staff has been meeting with and providing guidance to other local jurisdictions on how to access CDAA (e.g. Community Service Districts, School Districts). This process includes:

- ✓ Cover letter
- ✓ Resolution (to designate authorized agent)
- ✓ Resolution (proclaiming a state of emergency)
- ✓ Application
- ✓ Plan development
- ✓ Reimbursement

Presentations will be made to local service clubs seeking assistance on behalf of private landowners.

A multi-jurisdictional webpage has been developed by staff that resides on the County portal dedicated to tree mortality. The types of information available include:

- Current County resolution proclaiming a local state of emergency
- Governor's Executive Order on Tree Mortality and authorizing CDAA
- FAQ's
- Informational brochures/handouts
- Links to essential sites
- Contact info
- Current actions
- List of Licensed Timber Operators (Tree Removal Companies)
- List of Licensed Foresters and Arborists

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

- KVML
- myMOTHERLODE.com
- Union Democrat

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

Each agency must apply for CDAA independently of the County and is responsible to develop its own plans based on what their governing Board desires to accomplish and within their jurisdictional authority. Local governments include County, City, special districts and Tribes. It is important for the Board and the community to understand that the application for CDAA and the way in which each agency implements their plan is between them and Cal OES.

Hazard Tree Removal on County Owned and Maintained Properties

The County of Tuolumne has been in the process of identifying and removing dead and dying trees due to drought and successful bark beetle infestation for months now. This process continues as the number of hazard trees has greatly increased. Public safety and continuity of essential services (power, water, communications, roads, etc.) are of primary concern. Therefore, County resources will be focused in the following areas:

- Roads
- County Facilities
- Airports

Tuolumne County will assess all County owned and maintained infrastructure for dead and/or dying trees due to drought and bark beetle infestation within 200 feet of infrastructure. Registered Professional Foresters (and/or licensed Arborists) will inspect trees for successful bark beetle attack and designate trees for removal. Visually dead trees (brown from top to bottom) will be marked and pictures taken to document mortality. Photographs will be taken of all dead trees and a GIS mapping system is being developed utilizing GPS locators for each worksite.

The Roads Department is assessing all County roads (with assistance of Licensed Foresters or Arborists) and will be prioritized and categorized as outlined below:

- Priority 1 – Major Collectors (ex. Tuolumne Rd., Phoenix Lake Rd.)
- Priority 2 – Minor Collectors (ex. Fuller Rd., Woodham Carne Rd.)
- Priority 3 – Local Collectors (ex. Subdivisions: Ponderosa Hills)

Only roads in pine belts will be assessed at this time (2,500-6,000 ft elevation).

Private Property

Hazard trees located on private property, that threaten public Right of Way or Public Infrastructure, will be assessed and removed with landowner approval only (Right of Entry Permit attached). By signing the attached permit, landowner allows access and entry to property to the State of California, the County of Tuolumne, and their agents, officials, employees, and/or volunteers, contractors and subcontractors, subject to all license, 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. Owner also agrees and understands the County and/or its agents may sell the felled trees and hereby waives any and all right, actions, claims, in law or equity as to the value of the said trees in exchange for the services provided pursuant to this Permit. The county will not be requesting reimbursement from Cal OES for the removal of trees from private property that do not threaten the public Right of Way or Public Infrastructure.

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. However, there are several tools available locally to assist in the removal of trees and slash. Located within Tuolumne County are several mills:

- Sierra Pacific Industries
- Ultra Power-Chinese Camp
- American Wood Fibers

Each has indicated their willingness to become a partner by accepting wood products.

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

Meetings with local tree removal companies and haulers has been scheduled to determine capacity for potential contracts.

The County is also in the process of developing a contract with a local company who specializes in all aspects of tree removal, inclusive of consulting on process, site management of sites designated to receive wood product, and rental of equipment.

Inmate Crews

County staff has met with Cal Fire representatives and the local Sheriff's Office in an effort to contract for use of inmate crews. 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.

Request for Air Curtain Burner

County is in the process of developing a request to Cal OES and/or Cal Fire to purchase an Air Curtain Burner to dispose of slash, small trees, limbs, branches, and pine needles. A location will be designated to bring slash and other wood products in which local inmate crews will maintain the site and feed the wood products into the air curtain burner.

Potential Revenues Generated by Wood Product

Any revenues generated from the sale of wood products salvaged may be used to offset the local match of 25% or to offset the claim to Cal OES for CDAA. As outlined in the Right of Entry Permit, any and all revenues generated from wood product salvaged from private property is waived, by the landowner, in exchange for the services provided pursuant to the Permit signed by the land owner.

This plan is a rough draft and has not yet gone before the Board of Supervisors for final approval. The plan is scheduled to go before the Board on January 5th for consideration and approval.