



CAL FIRE

Forest Practice

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) enforces the laws that regulate timber harvesting on privately-owned lands in California. These laws are found in the Forest Practice Act, enacted in 1973 to ensure logging was done in a manner that would preserve our fish, wildlife, forests, and streams. Additional rules adopted by the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, and environmental laws such as the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the Endangered Species Acts (ESA and CESA), are also enforced to protect these resources.

CAL FIRE ensures private landowners abide by these laws when harvesting trees. Compliance with the Forest Practice Act and Board rules apply to all commercial harvesting operations for landowners of small parcels, ranchers owning hundreds of acres, and large timber companies with thousands of acres.

The Timber Harvesting Plan (THP) is the blueprint submitted by a landowner to CAL FIRE outlining logging operations and providing protection for natural and cultural resources. Although there are exemptions for specific cases, the THP describes what trees the landowner intends to harvest, how they will be harvested, and what steps will be taken to prevent damage to the environment. THPs are prepared by Registered Professional Foresters (RPFs) who are licensed to prepare these complicated, detailed plans. CAL FIRE reviews and approves approximately 400 THPs each year. THPs can range from about 100 pages to more than 500 pages. All logging must be done by a Licensed Timber Operator (LTO).

CAL FIRE does not have the authority to deny a THP that is in compliance with state and federal laws and regulations simply because the logging plan is unpopular with the public. A THP that does not comply with all forestry and environmental regulations is returned to the RPF. It is only approved after the RPF and landowner agree to make the changes necessary to ensure compliance with all laws. CAL FIRE follows-up on approved THPs with site inspections and can shut down operations or require corrective work to ensure protection of the environment. CAL FIRE can also pursue criminal or civil prosecution with significant fines against RPFs, LTOs, and landowners if illegal operations are found.

CAL FIRE works in conjunction with the California Department of Fish and Game, California Regional Water Quality Control Boards, and the California Geological Survey when reviewing THPs.

