

BOARD OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION

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News Release

EMERGENCY REGULATION ADOPTED FOR REMOVAL OF DEAD AND DYING TREES

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SACRAMENTO—The California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection adopted an emergency regulation for the removal of dead and dying trees at their June 17th meeting. The adoption was made in response to the ever-growing number of drought-related dead and dying trees across the State that are mounting concerns over intensifying wildfire conditions. Under the regulation, drought has been added as a condition that can constitute an emergency action. This will allow individual landowners or Registered Professional Foresters (RPF; for projects that require an RPF) to apply for an exemption to cut and remove dead and dying* trees of any size without the typical timber harvest plan preparation and submission requirements as well as completion and stocking report requirements.

The US Forest Service, Forest Health Protection Program conducted special early season aerial surveys of Southern California and the Southern Sierras in April to get a preliminary assessment of forest conditions in some of the most severely drought-impacted areas of the State. Approximately 12 ½ million dead trees were identified – 4 times that of all of California’s tree die-off in 2014. In 2014, an estimated 3.3 million trees died throughout the state, nearly double 2013 mortality rates.

“When you follow the trend of what is happening in California’s forests, it is clear we have a big problem,” said George Gentry, California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection Executive Director. “The drought is having compounding effects on the landscape, with more and more trees becoming stressed and dying directly from the drought as well as from the ever-increasing beetle populations as more trees become weakened and beetle populations are able to expand and thrive. By implementing this emergency regulation, the Board is empowering people to protect their homes and land this summer from catastrophic wildfires and hazardous falling trees.”

*Trees classified as dying are those with 50 percent or more of the crown foliage dead or fading in color (excluding normal autumn coloration changes), or with evidence of successful bark beetle attacks around the circumference of the tree trunk.

The Board's mission is to lead California in developing policies and programs that serve the public interest in environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable management of forest and rangelands, and a fire protection system that protects and serves the people of the state.

On average more than 100 Habitable Structures are destroyed each year by wildfires. These regulations will help to immediately facilitate the cutting and removal of dead and dying trees, which will reduce the risk of large, damaging wildfires; decrease home and structure losses; enhance firefighter and public safety; and reduce fire suppression costs. It will also help to prevent negative impacts to watersheds; fisheries and wildlife habitat; public health; water supply and quality; and local economies, while decreasing greenhouse gas emissions.

This regulation will be submitted to the Office of Administrative Law on July 1, 2015 and the public comment period will close at 5:00 p.m. on July 6, 2015. The emergency rule may be approved as early as July 11, 2015 and will be in effect for 6 months, after which time the Board has the option of two additional 90-day re-adoptions. The Board has not yet determined if they are going to pursue permanent rulemaking.

For the exemption application (1038(k)), go to

http://calfire.ca.gov/resource_mgt/resource_mgt_forestpractice_harvestingforms.php after July 11, 2015.

For more information on California's forest health conditions or the emergency rule, contact Katie Harrell at (510) 847-5482.

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