

REMOVE YOUR DEAD TREES. REDUCE YOUR WILDFIRE RISK.



Tree Mortality—Drought and Bark Beetles
What Property Owners Need to Know—FAQs



Bark beetles and drought are creating havoc in California’s forested areas. Together, they are a deadly combination. Millions of trees have died and the devastation continues. Knowing that healthy trees best withstand drought and resist bark beetle attack, property owners can take steps to optimize tree health and reduce wildfire risk. Stay informed and learn about resources available in your community regarding tree mortality and what you can do to protect your home, trees and property. Act now.

LOOKING FOR BARK BEETLES

Blobs of reddish-brown pitch on the outside of a tree trunk are often a sign that bark beetles successfully attacked. The outside of the tree may also have flaking bark, or holes caused by woodpeckers—both of these are good indicators that bark beetles may be present.

Needles on dying conifer trees begin to turn a reddish-brown and often start changing color at the top of the tree. The color change gradually moves down the tree. Other trees may slowly fade from green to brown.

Bark beetles are small hard-shelled insects, generally black or dark brown, about the size of a piece of cooked rice. In a successful attack, bark beetles tunnel under bark, cutting off the supply of food and water the tree needs to survive. They can kill a tree in as little as two to four weeks.



To see how your area is impacted by tree mortality, visit:
calfire.ca.gov/TreeMortalityViewer

**SEE REVERSE FOR ANSWERS TO
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

TREE MORTALITY AND BARK BEETLE FAQs



What is tree mortality?

Tree mortality means trees have died—a normal occurrence in natural ecosystems. The difference now is that the extended drought has caused an abnormally high number of trees in California's forests and wildland-urban interface areas to weaken and/or die. Weakened trees are more susceptible to bark beetle attack. Once a tree is successfully invaded by bark beetles, there is no recovery for the tree; it will die.

How significant is California's tree mortality from bark beetles and drought?

According to the U.S. Forest Service, tree mortality from bark beetles and drought has reached over 102 million trees since 2010. In 2014, 3.3 million trees died; in 2015, 29 million trees died, and in 2016 over 62 million trees died. Most tree mortality in California has occurred in the southern Sierra Nevada and the Central Coast. Currently, 10 counties starting in Placer County and extending along the Central Sierra into Kern County have been identified as high-hazard zones for tree mortality.



If there are dead trees around my house, what should I do?

Dead trees need to be removed. They are fuel for wildfire. Standing dead trees will rot, becoming unstable, and will eventually fall. Dead trees can fall on people, homes, buildings and infrastructure, such as power lines. The sooner a tree is removed the better.

How do I know if a tree is dead from bark beetles?

Early signs may be difficult to interpret, but if there are signs that bark beetles have successfully attacked a tree (see "Looking for Bark Beetles" on front), the tree is dead or will die soon. It often takes months for outward signs of mortality to show.

Whose responsibility is it to remove a dead tree?

On private property, it is the responsibility of the property owner to remove dead and dying trees. It is recommended that landowners consult with a licensed professional forester or arborist if they are unfamiliar with tree harvesting practices.

I can't afford to remove my trees, what should I do?

Investigate local assistance opportunities. Most likely there are others in the community with a similar situation. There may be local efforts to help those needing assistance. Talk to your local Fire Safe Council or your local fire department. The state's Tree Mortality Task Force is looking for opportunities to host "resource fairs" in affected communities where local groups and individuals will be able to meet with multiple agencies to talk about available funding. Information on these resource fairs will be posted on PrepareForBarkBeetle.org.

What environmental requirements are there for removing dead trees on my property?

An emergency regulation by the California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection in 2015 allows for an exemption to cut dead and dying trees of any size without the normal regulatory requirement such as submitting a timber harvest plan or follow-up completion and stocking report inspections. For more information visit: ReadyForWildfire.org/DeadTreeRemoval.

What do I do with my dead trees now that I've cut them down?

You can leave dead trees on your property only if they are outside of the legally required 100 feet of Defensible Space or you can have them removed. If you are leaving the trees on your property, they need to be properly handled. If you plan on using the wood for firewood, cut it into the appropriate firewood length, cover with clear plastic and leave for at least six months to kill the beetles. If possible, remove freshly cut wood. Otherwise, cover, lop or chip infested wood—and do not place near healthy trees unless fully dry. For more specific direction visit: PrepareforBarkBeetle.org.

Can dead trees be burned?

Yes, on permitted burn days. Check with your local fire station, CAL FIRE office, or air quality district for details on burn days and proper burning requirements.

Do I need to hire a licensed tree service or can I cut down dead trees on my property?

It is highly recommended that you hire a professional to cut down your trees, as tree removal can be dangerous. Falling trees can also be hazardous to people, nearby trees and infrastructure, such as roads, cars and power lines.

How do I prevent bark beetles in the future?

The most effective way to prevent bark beetles is by following best forest health practices. In order to do this, you need to plan for extreme weather years. Plant those species that are adapted to the area you live in and maintain a diverse forest of trees. When planting, ensure that trees are widely spaced, and that the number of trees growing on your land is appropriate for the acreage in order to reduce competition for limited water, light and soil nutrients. There are some professional herbicide treatments that may help trees fight off bark beetles, but they have not always been proven to work.

