



Timber Harvesting

CAL FIRE's Role in Timber Harvesting

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) enforces the laws that regulate logging on privately-owned lands in California. These laws are found in the Forest Practice Act which was enacted in 1973 to ensure that logging is done in a manner that will also preserve and protect our fish, wildlife, forests, and streams. Additional rules enacted by the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection are also enforced to protect these resources.

CAL FIRE ensures that private landowners abide by these laws when harvesting trees. Although there are specific exemptions in some cases, 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 environmental review document submitted by a landowner to CAL FIRE outlining what timber he or she wants to harvest, how it will be harvested, and the steps that will be taken to prevent damage to the environment. THPs are prepared by Registered Professional Foresters (RPFs) who are licensed to prepare these comprehensive, detailed plans. THPs can range from about 100 pages to more than 500 pages.

CAL FIRE does not have the authority to deny a THP that is in compliance with state and federal rules and laws simply because the logging plan is unpopular with the public. The Department reviews and approves between 400 and 1400 THPs each year. 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 regularly conducts site inspections on approved THPs and can shut down operations, cite or fine RPFs, Licensed Timber Operators (LTOs) and landowners, if illegal operations are found.

The Timber Harvesting Plan Review Process

When a THP is submitted to a CAL FIRE Review Team Office the following process takes place:

Within 10 days of receipt:

- The THP is assigned a number.
- Copies are distributed to all state and federal reviewing agencies and posted on an ftp site (<ftp://thp.fire.ca.gov/THPLibrary>).
- A Notice of Intent is sent to landowners within 300 feet of the THP, the office of the county clerk within the THP county, and the local CAL FIRE unit headquarters.
- A Notice of Submission is sent to anyone who has requested notification in writing.
- A first review of the THP is done by a multi-agency team that includes CAL FIRE, the California Department of Fish and Game, the California Regional Water Quality Control Board, the California Geological Survey and other agencies as needed. This first review is meant to assess whether the THP is complete, accurate and in proper order. Any incomplete applications are returned to the RPF who prepared the THP.
- If the THP is deemed complete, it is officially filed. A Notice of Filing is sent to the person who submitted the THP, the office of the County Clerk and to anyone who has requested notification in writing.

The public may submit comments to CAL FIRE concerning a THP once the plan is submitted. Comments will be accepted by the Department in writing or via e-mail up until the close of business on the designated final date for public comment. The public is informed as to where they may send their

e-mail comments on all public notices and postings. All comments regarding plans must be in writing and addressed to CAL FIRE at the appropriate CAL FIRE Review Team Office where the plan is filed. CAL FIRE responds in writing to public comments that raise significant environmental issues.

Addresses for written comments to CAL FIRE facilities can be found at [CAL FIRE Contacts](#)

The names of the assigned e-mail mailboxes for electronic comments are as follows:

Santa Rosa - santarosapubliccomment@fire.ca.gov
Redding - reddingpubliccomment@fire.ca.gov
Fresno - fresnopubliccomment@fire.ca.gov

Public comments pertaining to CEQA documents, normally reviewed by the Environmental Coordinator in Sacramento, should be sent to:
sacramentopubliccomment@fire.ca.gov.

Within 10 days of the Notice of Filing:

The review team may conduct a Pre-Harvest Inspection (PHI) to examine the proposed logging site. More than 95 percent of all plans receive a PHI.

Within 20 days of the Pre-Harvest Inspection:

A second meeting is held by the review team to discuss the PHI reports and to finalize any recommendations or changes needed for the THP.

30 days after the Pre-harvest Inspection:

The public comment period ends. Frequently, however, the public comment period is extended to allow time for all agencies involved in the THP process to complete their reviews or for additional study of a specific THP issue.

Following the Review Team's final recommendation:

The final recommendations are sent to the RPF for response. After the RPF's response is received, and the public comment period closes, the THP goes to the CAL FIRE Director, or the Director's representative, who has 15 working days to approve or deny the THP. The Director considers all Board of Forestry and Fire Protection rules, the review team's recommendations, and any public comment that was submitted concerning the proposed timber operation before making a decision to approve or deny the THP. CAL FIRE prepares and sends or e-mails a written response to each person or group who submits public comment on a THP.

Once a THP is approved:

- CAL FIRE Unit Forest Practice Inspectors periodically inspect the logging operation to ensure compliance with the approved THP and all laws and regulations.
- Any violations are promptly acted upon. Enforcement actions range from violation notices requiring corrective actions, assessment of civil fines, and criminal proceedings through the court system. Action may also be taken against the license of the timber operator or the RPF on the operation.
- When a THP operation has been completed, the timber owner has the responsibility for submitting a completion report to CAL FIRE. CAL FIRE then inspects the area to certify that all rules were followed.
- The landowner must restock (replant) the area according to the Forest Practice Rules requirements. A stocking report must be filed with CAL FIRE to certify that these requirements were met. If the landowner fails to restock the land, CAL FIRE may hire a contractor to do the work and bill the landowner.



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