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# CAL FIRE NEWS RELEASE

## California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection



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**RELEASE**  
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### **Officials announce over 66 million trees dead in California** Coordinated effort continues to remove dead trees

**Sacramento** - As wildfires burn across California, new estimates on the number of dead trees in California were announced, prompting continued concern for California's forest health and wildfire danger. Today the US Forest Service released the outcome of its latest aerial surveys over California forestland, finding that over 66 million trees have now died due to drought and bark beetles since 2010. That number is up from 29 million dead trees in 2015 and 3.3 million in 2014.

"The sheer number of dead trees is hard to imagine, but it's real and what we have been anticipating for some time now," said Chief Ken Pimlott, CAL FIRE director and state forester. "We must continue our work to remove dead trees around roadways and critical infrastructure, while homeowners remove dead trees around their homes."

In October, 2015 Governor Brown signed an [executive order](#) due to the tree mortality, which created the state's [Tree Mortality Task Force](#). Over 80 local, state and federal agencies, as well as utilities and various stakeholders make up the task force, whose efforts have continued to focus on the coordinated response. The task force has been working to provide for public health and safety, as the dead trees pose a serious public safety and wildfire threat.

A coordinated effort has been underway to remove dead trees in the 10 counties identified to have the highest hazard. The 10 counties span from Placer County down through the Central Sierra to Kern County. While county public works crews have been removing trees along county roads, Caltrans has been hard at work focusing on state highways. PG&E, Southern California Edison and other utility companies have been removing hazardous trees around their powerlines. All while CAL FIRE and US Forest Service crews continue building fuel breaks and assisting the counties in their efforts.

"The recently released estimates show the voraciousness with which the tree mortality epidemic is gripping California," said Kevin Cann, Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC) Board Member, Mariposa County Supervisor, and Member of the Governor's Task Force on Tree Mortality. "The situation is dire, not just to those living in rural communities directly dealing with the effects, but to all Californians impacted by the threat wildfires pose to the State's resources. The partnerships which have evolved between the impacted counties, CAL FIRE, Caltrans, PG&E, and many others while dealing with this emergency to quickly remove dead trees efficiently have been vital to the success of this response."

Officials are urging the public to do their part as well as remove the dead trees around their homes in order to reduce their wildfire threat. “It’s critical now that we are in fire season that everyone living in these high risk areas be prepared to evacuate before a wildfire breaks out,” Chief Pimlott added. “If a wildfire burns in an area with high tree mortality we know that it will burn faster than many residents may be ready for.”

In February 2016, CAL FIRE awarded nearly two million dollars in local [fire prevention grants](#) for local projects focused on the removal of dead and dying trees in order to reduce the wildfire threat around homes. CAL FIRE, OES, along with the Tree Mortality Task Force members, continues to coordinate additional assistance to help the public remove trees on their property.

For more information on how to be ready for wildfire and to learn how to make your trees healthy and prepared for bark beetles, visit [www.ReadyForWildfire.org](http://www.ReadyForWildfire.org).

### **MEDIA NOTES**

High resolution photos of tree mortality, bark beetles and education graphics:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B63s5etyr7jYMG1haC1rMFZtTjA>

Video of crews working to remove dead trees:

[https://drive.google.com/open?id=0Bx\\_D8oAj6JzmR25BcUIwQ1VJSWc](https://drive.google.com/open?id=0Bx_D8oAj6JzmR25BcUIwQ1VJSWc)

Tree Mortality B-Roll:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/0Bx\\_D8oAj6JzmbHRvSIF2TEJZbEk/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0Bx_D8oAj6JzmbHRvSIF2TEJZbEk/view?usp=sharing)