

Dear Sir/Madam,

As you know, last year, massive wildfires raged across southern California. The fires caused the worst damage in the history of the state. Driven by Santa Ana winds, the wildfires scorched 391,876 acres in San Diego County. As bad as the Firestorm 2003 was, the threat of more fuel driven fires is a grim reality on any given day under the same circumstances. The wildfires burned a third of the county, leaving the remaining two thirds at risk.

The County of San Diego has secured federal funds to address the threat. In the three priority areas: Palomar Mountain, the Greater Julian area, and the Lost Valley area, the County and its partners will remove dead, dying and diseased trees, which present a fire threat to communities and forests.

The County is asking for your permission to enter your land to evaluate the fire hazard for your property, and your community and, if it is necessary, to remove the hazardous trees. The County will conduct this work free of charge to landowners.

Because the threat of fire is urgent, we need to start tree-removal as soon as possible. We count on your timely response. Please sign the attached "Right to Enter" form and return it to the listed address within 10 (ten) days.

*The County of San Diego*



The County of San Diego

Supervisor Dianne Jacob, Chairwoman  
Supervisor Pam Slater-Price, Vice Chairwoman  
Supervisor Greg Cox  
Supervisor Ron Roberts  
Supervisor Bill Horn

For more information, please visit our website:  
<http://www.sdcdpw.org/tree/>

Hotline: 866.402.6044 and 858.495.5494

The County of San Diego

## Fire Safety and Fuels Reduction Program in Questions and Answers



Starting from June 2004, the County of San Diego will conduct a program to remove dead, dying and diseased trees on public and private lands. In this brochure, you can find some Frequently Asked Questions about the program. For more information, please call our hotline 866.402.6044 and 858.495.5494, or visit our website: <http://www.sdcdpw.org/tree/>

### **WHAT IS THE DEAD, DYING AND DISEASED TREES PROBLEM ALL ABOUT?**

In the County of San Diego, hundreds of thousands of trees, weakened by years of drought, are dead or dying due to widespread infestation by an insect called the bark beetle. These trees present a significant wildfire threat for the County. The County of San Diego will remove the dead, dying and diseased trees in the areas that are identified as most hazardous: Palomar Mountain, the Greater Julian area, and the Lost Valley area.



### **WHAT IS THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO DOING ABOUT THE DEAD TREES?**

Despite a dramatically reduced budget, the County of San Diego succeeded in securing funds to address the problem. In May of 2004, the County was awarded three federal grants totaling \$39.575 million. These grants allow the County to start removing the hazardous trees in the high-risk areas, especially around dwellings and along evacuation corridors.

### **WHAT SHOULD A PROPERTY OWNER DO ABOUT TREES THAT THREATEN A BUILDING?**

If you are in the priority areas, the County will remove the hazardous trees free of charge. To start the work, however, we need to have the right to enter your property. We will be sending out the necessary documentation and instructions to the property owners. The promptness of your response will determine the work schedule in your community. If you live outside the identified priority areas, but are concerned about your fire safety, you can assess and remove the hazardous trees. We would recommend hiring an experienced licensed arborist.

### **HOW CAN YOU TELL A DEAD, DYING OR DISEASED TREE?**

Licensed foresters will inspect your trees and identify the ones that present a fire threat. They will look for the evidence of the bark beetle presence, the conditions of the bark and foliage or needles, and

other signs of infestation. If you would like to roughly estimate a number of trees to be removed on your land, use a simple rule of thumb: "if it's red, it's dead." Even partial damage means that a tree is infected, and, during the drought, will not be able to recover. Such trees need to be removed.

### **WHY DO I HAVE TO REMOVE MY DEAD, DYING OR DISEASED TREES?**

Dead, dying and diseased trees constitute a life safety hazard. They are kindling, which means they can initiate or feed fires; they can fall down on buildings, or block roads. These trees are life threatening during fire seasons, when they fall down and block evacuation corridors. That is why the County secured funding to treat the areas that have the greatest fire threat. In Palomar Mountain, the Greater Julian area, and the Lost Valley area, the County removes hazardous trees on public and private lands. Outside these areas, the fire threat still remains possible. We encourage homeowners to take care of their trees to prevent catastrophic wildfires.

### **WILL THE COUNTY REMOVE THE TREES ON PRIVATE PROPERTY?**

Yes. Your private dead, dying and diseased trees can threaten public and private land surrounding your property. In order to prevent fires on private and public lands, these trees should be removed. The County will remove the trees free of charge, but we need to receive a signed "right to enter" form from you in order to start. We count on your understanding and cooperation.

### **WILL THE COUNTY REPLACE THE TREES IT REMOVES?**

No additional tree planting activities will be necessary. Currently, our forests are overpopulated; average tree density in the County of San Diego exceeds the norm (80 trees per acre). The tree removal activities will be conducted under close supervision of forest and environmental agencies to bring forests to the natural tree density levels thus making the trees healthier and more resilient. The normal density of the forests provides enough water for trees even in the years of drought; and, under these conditions, healthy trees can easily resist invasive insects.

### **WHO IS IN CHARGE AND HOW WILL THE PROGRAM BE ADMINISTERED?**

The County of San Diego will manage all program activities in cooperation with other agencies. The County will notify the owners and residents in the

three priority areas. We will send the "right to enter" form to be signed and returned by property owners, so that the County employees and contractors can access hazardous trees. Returning forms in a timely manner is extremely important to allow work to be done. After the County receives the signed "right to enter" forms, it will assess and mark hazardous trees, and start the bidding process for tree-removal contracts. The vendors will start tree removal as soon as possible. They will cut and remove the marked trees. On completion of the operations, a forester will examine their work.

### **WHEN THE COUNTY IS ON MY PROPERTY REMOVING THE MARKED TREES, CAN YOU REMOVE MY OTHER TREES IF I PAY FOR IT?**

The County contracts out private vendors to remove marked trees. You can negotiate with the vendor to remove unmarked trees at your expense. The County will not pay for the removal of unmarked trees.

### **WHAT WILL THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO DO WITH MY TREES?**

We will utilize all timber and slash as quickly and as efficiently as possible. The trees that are less than six inches in diameter will be chipped and mulched on site. Timber that has some market value will be processed. Other trees will be chipped and used for landscaping, electricity co-generation, and as firewood.

### **CAN I REFUSE TO SIGN THE "RIGHT TO ENTER" FORM?**

You have a right to do so. In this case, however, your fire agency may inspect your property and, if there are hazardous trees on your land, you will have to remove them at your own expense.

### **I HAVE JUST RECEIVED A NOTICE OF THE TREE-REMOVAL WORK IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD. THE TIMING IS NOT GOOD FOR ME. HOW DO I GET IT CHANGED?**

The County of San Diego coordinates tree-removal efforts in cooperation with local, state, and federal agencies. At this time, it is not possible to reschedule the planned operations.

Note that your presence during the operations is not required.

### **WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?**

You can call hotline 866.402.6044 and 858.495.5494, or visit our website: <http://www.sdcdpw.org/tree/>