CAUTION: After a fire many trees are weakened from burning around the base of the trunk. The trees can fall over or blow down without warning. Shallow-rooted trees can also fall. Therefore be extremely alert when around burned trees.

What is hazard tree removal?
The work consists of removing dead and/or damaged trees that pose a hazard to people, animals, personal property, utilities, and other structures that might be damaged from falling trees.

When should trees be removed?
Dead trees that pose a threat to life or property may be located adjacent to homes, outbuildings, access roads and other structures. Assessing tree mortality is an important step in determining the risk to life and property. Note: Some trees may not be dead and only be smoke damaged or will sprout back. Consult with a registered professional forester or certified arborist for assistance.

How should trees be removed?
Work should be completed by qualified fallers and/or equipment operators. Inspect the tree prior to falling to identify any hazards such as cracks, mistletoe brooms or deformities in the bole or canopy that can increase the complexity of falling the tree. When cutting hazard trees, you should try to limit soil disturbance and the number of vehicular trips across your land. This will help to minimize erosion and noxious weed introduction. All branches should be cut from the tree and the trunk of tree should lay flat on the soil surface. Cut-tree material is often more valuable left on-site. Broadcasting chips from dead
After the Fire

Hazard Tree Removal

How should trees be removed?

Trees back onto the burned land can help reduce erosion. Note: Depth of chips can reduce regeneration success and delay or eliminate natural seed bank regeneration as well. Chips can reduce weed growth but also tie up nitrogen in the soil when they break down. This may be important if reseeding native grasses is done where chips are being applied. Log erosion barriers may help stabilize soils on slopes in some areas (consult with NRCS, CalFire, register professional forester or erosion control specialist for details on this practice). In addition, lopping and scattering limbs and finer material can help reduce surface water flow, erosion and improve soil condition by replacing organic matter and nutrients.

Safety precautions

Removing hazardous trees in burned areas is dangerous due to a significant risk that burned trees may fall unexpectedly or drop branches on workers with little or no warning—especially during times of high winds, heavy precipitation and/or saturated soils. Always use the appropriate personal protection gear when operating a chainsaw, such as: hard hat, gloves, eye protection, hearing protection, chaps and steel toed boots. Use chainsaws with spark arresters and review their safety instructions. Review safety instructions when using ATVs or other machinery.

In the years following the fire, many of the trees will begin to fall on their own as roots, trunks and limbs decay. Landowners should continue to be aware of these hazards.

Consider the 5-D formula when assessing tree fall hazard before making a decision to fell a tree, to prune back or to maintain: 1) Dead; 2) Dying; 3) Diseased; 4) Damaged (fire, dozer or equipment damaged); or 5) Disabled (exposed root systems, slope movement, erosion around trunk, etc.). The more Ds that apply, the more likely the tree will fall at some point in the future. But there is no guarantee that the tree will fall soon even if all 5 Ds are present.

For More Help

Contact the California Forestry Stewardship Program’s Forestry Helpline at: 800-738-TREE (8733) or forestryhelp@gmail.com for more information and a list of Registered Professional Foresters and Certified Arborists practicing in California.