

CAL FIRE NEWS RELEASE

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection



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Help Keep California Forests Healthy. CAL FIRE Calls on Timberland Owners to Help Prevent Bark Beetle Outbreaks in Storm-Damaged Ponderosa Pine

Sacramento – Beyond the continued threat of flooding and recovering from the impacts of flooding and other events, damage from the historic 2023 winter storms also continues to cause issues in California’s ponderosa pine forests and woodlands. Pine trees that were uprooted or broken in recent storms may attract and spread bark beetles if not treated and monitored.

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) encourages timberland owners to work with a Licensed Timber Operator to salvage trees. This salvage can include moving downed trees to markets where the accumulated carbon can be stored for years or used as fuel in plants with best available control technology to reduce harmful smoke emissions.

Where downed or dead ponderosa pine trees are going to remain on timberlands, CAL FIRE encourages timberland owners to lop branches from stems and spread in sunny areas away from roads or structures. Also, buck pine logs to lengths shorter than four feet, or bury, chip, de-bark, solarize, or burn pine slash before beetle colonies become established and spread to nearby healthy pines.

Bark beetles are native species to North America and can be found at elevations from sea level to 11,000 feet. The effects of bark beetle are evident throughout California and their presence and spread is a contributing factor to the [state’s tree mortality](#).

Under normal conditions, bark beetles renew the forest by killing older trees and those weakened by disease, drought, smog, or physical damage. California’s current prolonged drought, coupled with new storm damage and stress, has weakened a greater number of trees, increasing the number of successful beetle attacks. The more success the beetles have, the more beetles reproduce and spread to other areas of the forest. Healthy trees can fend off bark beetle attacks by exuding pitch into the holes, pushing the beetles out. However, drought-stressed trees have a difficult time producing enough pitch to fight off insects.

For more information on how to help, see the Tree Notes link below: 3, 19, and 28, or contact your [local Forester](#).

<https://www.caforestpestcouncil.org/treenotes>

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