



# NEWS RELEASE

*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

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Contact: Erwin Fogerson, P.E.  
Hazardous Tree Removal Program  
(909) 867-1240

Tracey Martinez, Public Information Officer  
San Bernardino County Fire Department  
(909) 386-8408, (800) 426-8689, pager #3307

## ***JUNE 30<sup>TH</sup> DEADLINE TO HAVE DEAD TREES MARKED FOR REMOVAL***

***Once Trees Are Registered, They Will Be Removed in 2007 or 2008  
Property Owners Should Also Consider Thinning Live Trees***

SAN BERNARDINO — The deadline for private property owners to have dead, diseased or dying trees marked for removal under the San Bernardino County Hazardous Tree Abatement Program is June 30, 2007. After the deadline, tree removal will be the responsibility of the property owner.

The deadline is only for having the trees identified and registered with the program. The actual removal of the trees continues through 2008.

“It’s critical that property owners in the San Bernardino Mountains contact us so we can register their trees,” said Assistant Chief Peter Brierty. “The public funding for the Hazardous Tree Removal Program will expire by the end of the year, and we need to identify these trees and put them on our schedule while we still have funds available.”

The prolonged drought, now in its seventh year, and the bark beetle infestation, have combined to kill millions of trees in the local mountains. The Hazardous Tree Removal Program has significantly reduced the potential for a catastrophic wildland fire — since 2004, members of the Mountain Area Safety Taskforce (MAST) have removed more than 1 million dead or dying trees, and more are being taken out every day.

Participants in the tree removal program include the County of San Bernardino, CalFire, the U.S. Forest Service, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Caltrans, and Southern California Edison.

However, the \$70 million in funding from the federal government to remove trees from private property is expiring at the end of this year. To qualify for the program, property owners must have their trees registered by June 30. To do so, they should contact the San Bernardino County Hazardous Tree Removal Program at (909) 867-1240.

Homeowners also have other options for financial assistance to remove hazardous trees from their property. If they have trees near power lines, they should contact their local utility company. They may reach the Southern California Edison Tree Removal Program at: (800) 640-3652, [www.sce.com/barkbeetle/](http://www.sce.com/barkbeetle/)

For general tree removal advice, including information concerning regulatory requirements, financial assistance programs, and tree removal services in the San Bernardino Mountains area, contact your local fire department.

In addition to the tree removal deadline, MAST is shifting its program focus from the removal of dead trees to thinning live trees (“green fuel”) to promote a healthy forest and further reduce the potential for a catastrophic fire.

The problem fire protection officials face is that not only do live trees burn, the forest is overstocked, with 100 to 200 trees per acre, where a healthy forest has 40 to 60 trees per acre. Thinning live trees not only reduces the fire danger, it also frees up resources for the remaining trees, making them more healthy, restoring their vigor and making them more resistant to bark beetle infestation.

Thinning live trees also helps property owners create a defensible space around their homes. It is recommended that trees be spaced 20 to 30 feet apart, depending on the ground slope and other factors. This will also create a park-like environment.

Forest Care partners, the National Forest Association and CalFire, working under a grant from the USDA Forest Service, will reimburse property owners up to 75 percent of the cost of implementing a qualified tree thinning plan. Call (888) 883-THIN or complete the form online at: <http://www.sbnfa.com/forestcare.php>

Property owners may also obtain tree thinning advice from a licensed forester, at no charge, by contacting the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

#### **ABOUT THE MOUNTAIN AREA SAFETY TASKFORCE**

Formed in 2002, MAST is a coalition of local, state and federal government agencies, private companies and volunteer organizations in San Bernardino County that are concerned with public safety in the mountain areas of their respective jurisdictions. For more information about MAST, visit [www.calmast.org](http://www.calmast.org).

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