



ADVISORY 2
Los Altos Hills County Fire District
FY2019/20 Residential Program
Dead or Dying and Eucalyptus Residential Tree Removal Program
Presented to Commission on September 17, 2019

The following General Comments and FAQs provide an update to the April 16, 2019 Advisory regarding the FY2019/20 Los Altos Hills County Fire District (LAHCFD) Residential Program for removal of dead or dying Trees and removal of Eucalyptus trees. Information in the FAQ applies to developments in the FY2019/20 Program and is not indicative of future Tree Removal Programs.

PLEASE BE ADVISED - Property owners are responsible for the care, safety and removal of trees on their property. The District's current Tree Removal Program is designed as a measure to augment fire prevention. It is not a guarantee for individual property owner's dead tree removal. The Program does not replace property owners' obligations for maintenance, safety and removal of dead or dying trees on their property.

FAQ

1. What are the resources and programs for residents to prepare their property and protect from wildfires?

Residents are receiving frequent information about preparedness for wildfire and fire hazards from the media and various sources on the importance of using techniques of property hygiene on their property to reduce threat and damages from wildfires. Residents recognize with the recent house fires in Los Altos Hills that embers drift and with certain wind conditions can ignite other homes, trees and brush to create the spread of fire. The District recommends residents learn about how to manage their property hygiene and create defensible space around their residence as a method of protection to their property and life and to the property and life of neighbors.

2. What can I as a resident do to make my property safe from dead, dying or Eucalyptus trees?

Residents are encouraged to contact an arborist or tree company for an evaluation of their trees and an estimate for removal. The District is not accepting requests for tree removal service at this time. The District is now engaged with 170 property sites (limit of 3 tree removals per site) for removal of dead, dying or Eucalyptus trees that were on the FY2018/19 wait list. This effort will take some time to complete. As a result, no new trees are being added to a wait list.

3. Has a new FY2019/20 residential Dead Tree Removal Program been established?

A new dead tree removal program has not yet been established, therefore, additional request for tree removals are not being accepted at this time.

4. What are the prospects for a new Tree Removal Program?

The District will continue a Fuel Reduction Program that includes trees and that is within the guidelines of the LAHCFD-CWPP (Los Altos Hills County Fire District- Community Wildfire Protection Plan) but the extent to which trees on private property will be removed is currently under study.

5. What are LAHCFD-CWPP Guidelines?

Dead or dying and Eucalyptus tree removal by the District's Tree Removal Program and allocation of funds will be closely aligned with the LAHCFD- CWPP guidelines. The guidelines look at many factors for fuel reduction that includes removal of dead and dying trees, Eucalyptus and brush in a manner that supports wildfire mitigation, protection and prevention. Removal of a specific dead, dying or Eucalyptus trees on private property may or may not be in accordance with these guidelines.

The objective of the Fuel Reduction Program is to utilize fire science to assess and determine removal of fuel sources (trees, brush, vegetation) in a manner that impedes the path and intensity of fires based on geography and topology of the surroundings. Not all dead, dying or Eucalyptus trees fit these guidelines. Not all such trees can be removed by the limited funds and resources allocated by the Fire District. That said, trees eligible for removal by the District will depend on the location, surroundings and assessment of fire science guidelines to evaluate removal of the tree by the Fire District.

Recent fire experiences in the Campfire fires and those in Santa Barbara and Santa Rosa demonstrate that clearing trees and brush from ingress and egress of roadways is effective in saving lives by opening evacuation routes. Highway 17 is undergoing such a fuel removal program now.

The District Board of Commissioners are assessing various methods for expenditures of its limited funds for fuel reduction and for planning new programs that involve dead, dying and Eucalyptus tree and brush removal. The prior dead, dying and Eucalyptus tree removal program did not take into consideration these assessments largely due to lack of fire science experience with wildfires. The understanding of fire science as it relates to fuel reduction has quickly evolved based on recent tragic events. Future Eucalyptus and dead, dying tree removals will be based on the LAHCFD-CWPP guidelines and fire science factors.

6. What should I do?

If a tree on a resident's property is a safety issue, focus of neighbor's complaints, of concern to the property owner, the remedy is private action. The District Fuel Reduction Program is currently under development and trees that were on the FY2018/19 wait list are now being removed. Reliance on the District to remove private trees mostly likely will not be timely nor will it properly address immediate tree issues for the property owner. The property owner is encouraged to contact an arborist or tree company for an evaluation of the tree and cost of removal.

The District will be posting updates on the Fuel Reduction Program on the District website, www.lahcfd.org. The website provides the most efficient way to stay up to date. Also, the monthly Commission meeting agenda and minutes are published on the website under the Governance banner. Often times fuel reduction reports are part of the agenda.