



May 2011 (Report # RO-11-01)

Replaces April 2009 Report # RO-09-01



Marking Guidelines for Fire-Injured Trees in California

Sheri L. Smith and Daniel R. Cluck

If you are using these marking guidelines for your post-fire restoration it is imperative that you contact your local Forest Health Protection (FHP) service area staff for review of your draft NEPA document (**before public distribution**), responses to comments and for assistance with marking guideline selection and project implementation.

Yellow pine (ponderosa and Jeffrey pine), white fir, sugar pine and incense cedar guidelines are based on: Hood, Sharon M.; Smith, Sheri L.; Cluck, Daniel R. 2010. *Predicting mortality for five California conifers following wildfire*. Forest Ecology and Management. 260: 750-762.

Red fir guidelines are based on: Hood, Sharon M.; Smith, Sheri L.; Cluck, Daniel R. 2007. *Delayed conifer tree mortality following fire in California* In: Powers, Robert F., tech. editor. Restoring fire-adapted ecosystems: proceedings of the 2005 national silviculture workshop. Gen. Tech. Rep. PSW-GTR-203, Albany, CA: Pacific Southwest Research Station, Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture: p. 261-283.

Douglas-fir guidelines are based on: Hood, Sharon M. 2008. *Delayed Tree Mortality following Fire in Western Conifers*. JFSP Final Report 05-2-1-105, US Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station, Missoula, MT. 35 p.

Lodgepole pine guidelines are based on: Ryan, Kevin C.; Reinhardt, Elizabeth D. 1988. *Predicting post-fire mortality of seven western conifers*. Canadian Journal of Forest Research 18: 1291-1297.

The following guidelines use percent crown length killed (and percent crown length scorched for yellow pine) or percent crown volume killed (for Douglas-fir and lodgepole pine) only or in combination with dbh, cambium kill rating and/or the presence or absence of bark beetle activity. The yellow pine, white fir, incense cedar, sugar pine and red fir guidelines are based on five year post-fire data, the Douglas-fir guidelines are based on three year post-fire data and the lodgepole pine guidelines are based on three to eight year post-fire data.

The yellow pine guidelines are separated for percent of crown length scorched and percent crown length killed. The percent crown length scorched guideline is appropriate when evaluating trees in late season fires prior to subsequent bud break (heat killing of foliage may occur with only light injury to buds and twigs and the full extent of crown kill cannot be determined until bud break occurs). The percent crown length killed guideline is appropriate when evaluating trees post-bud break. The percent crown length killed guidelines for sugar pine, incense cedar and red and white fir, or the percent crown volume killed models for Douglas-fir and lodgepole pine are appropriate any time after fire injury (all trees should be evaluated before the beginning of the second post-fire winter, preferably within the first post-fire year).

Evaluation of Crown Injury

Visually estimate the percent crown length killed (PCLK) for **white fir, red fir, incense cedar and sugar pine** to the nearest 5 percent, by standing far enough back from the tree so that the entire crown is visible. Optimum viewing of the crown is against a blue sky away from the sun.

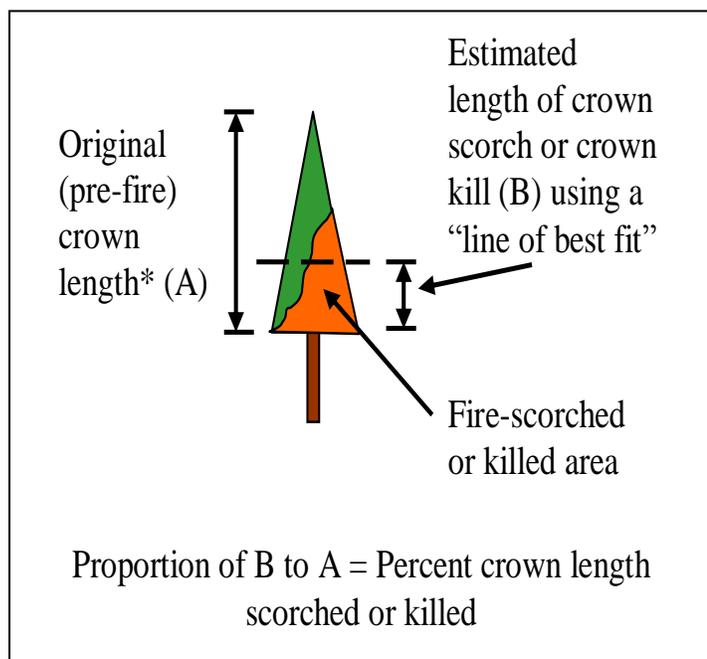


Figure 1. Estimating the percent crown length or scorched killed.

Evaluate **yellow pine pre-bud break** (estimating percent crown length scorched or PCLS) using this same method and the *pre-bud break* guideline (Table 3). *Crown length is a linear measurement and does not account for crown shape.*

Visually estimate the percent crown length killed (PCLK) for **yellow pine post-bud break**, to the nearest 5 percent, by looking for completely dead branches (both scorched and/or blackened). Count an entire scorched branch as part of the live crown if green needles are extending from any of its lateral shoots (Figure 2).

Visually estimate the percent crown volume killed (PCVK) for **Douglas-fir and lodgepole pine**, to the nearest 5 percent, by comparing the volumetric proportion of crown kill (brown needles and blackened fine branches) to the volume occupied by the entire pre-fire crown. *Crown volume estimates consider crown shape.*

First, determine the original crown base height. Pre-fire crown base height can be estimated by looking at the fine branch structure and needles. Branches lacking fine twigs were likely dead before the fire. Trees often have asymmetrical crown bases so, if necessary, visually "move" some of the lower branches to the other side of the crown to even out the base.

Next, determine the crown kill height by establishing a "line of best fit" (Figure 1). Crown killed areas include any brown needles, as well as any areas that have blackened fine branches. If large gaps occur in the crown (> 4 feet in length), visually "move" lower branches up to fill in these areas. Be sure to evaluate the backside of the tree if its condition cannot be determined from the original vantage point.



Figure 2. Bud survival on scorched branch.

Evaluation of Crown Injury

Figures 3 and 4 illustrate the different portions of fire-injured crowns for yellow pine and white fir and provide examples of the estimated crown length scorched (for pine) and crown length killed (for both pine and fir) as percentages of the original, pre-fire crown length.

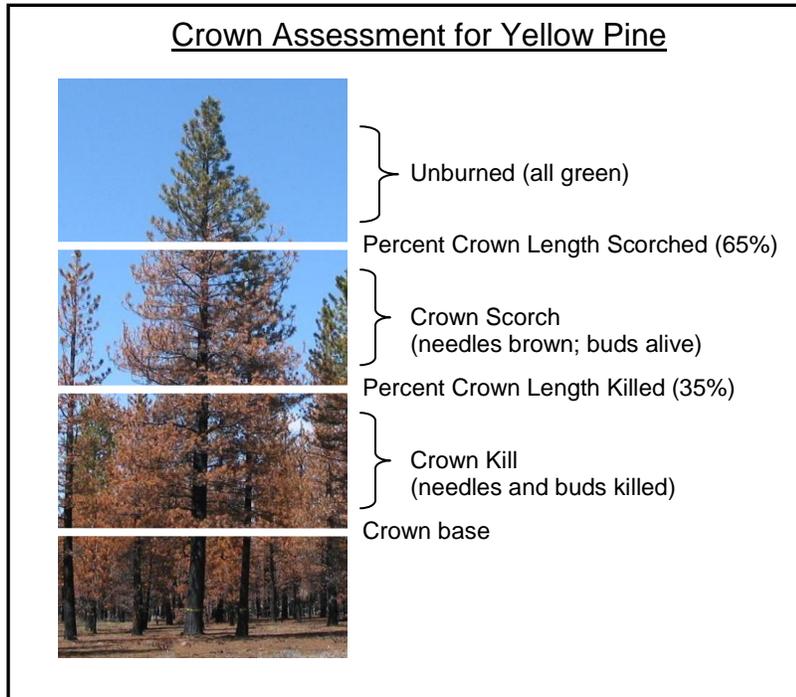


Figure 3. Crown assessment for yellow pine.

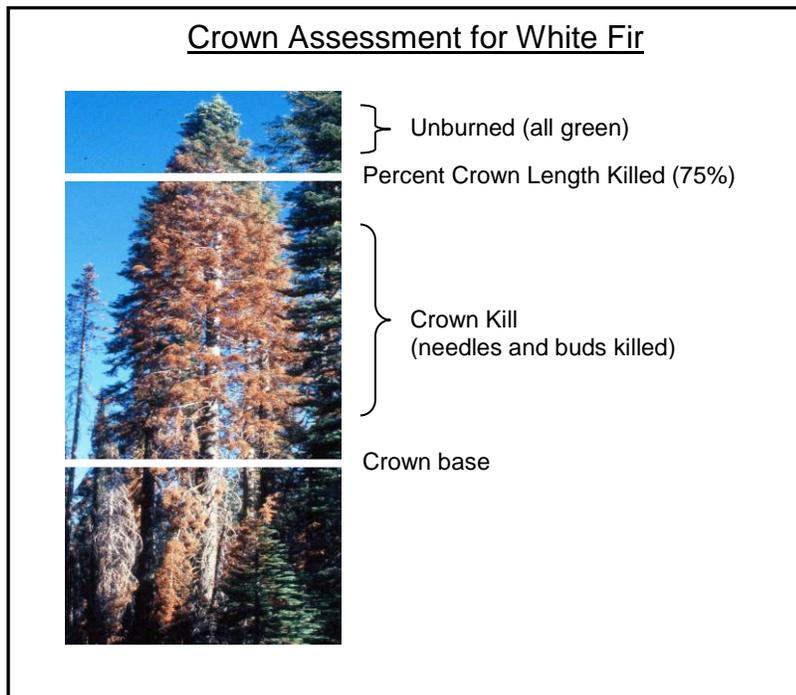
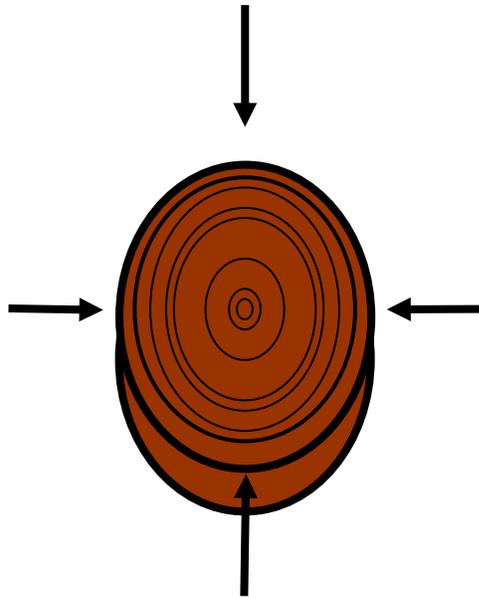


Figure 4. Crown assessment for white fir.

Evaluation of Cambium Injury



Sample cambium in as small an area as possible at 4 equally spaced locations around bole and within 3” of the ground line to minimize tree wounding (Figure 5)

Each sample is visually inspected in the field for color and condition of the tissue. Dead cambium is darker in color, often resin soaked and hard or gummy in texture. Live cambium is lighter in color, moist and rather pliable. Dead cells in the cambium zone also lose their plasticity which may allow the bark and wood to separate more easily (Ryan 1982). Add up the total number of dead samples (0 to 4) to determine the cambium kill rating (CKR). When both live and dead cambium is encountered in a sample choose the dominant condition of that sample (e.g. if more than half of the sample is dead then count it as dead).



Figure 6. Sampling cambium with a small hatchet.

Evaluation of Cambium Injury

Bark Charring as a substitute for direct cambium sampling

When salvage marking includes cambium sampling, additional time is required to assess each tree. Direct cambium sampling can be reduced by using unburned, light and deep bark char classes as a substitute (Hood et al 2008). **Moderately charred quadrants would still require direct sampling (except for lodgepole pine and Douglas-fir)**. Divide the tree bole into four quadrants and assess the bark within 1 foot of ground line. Use the bark char class that best represents the majority of the area. Please refer to the following bark char descriptions (Ryan 1982) when substituting bark char classes for direct cambium sampling. Determine the CKR (0 to 4) as previously described.

Unburned or light charring – light charring has some blackened areas on the bark but unburned portions remain. These unburned portions are generally found in the bark fissures. (*Assume cambium is alive except for lodgepole pine; must directly sample lightly charred quadrants for lodgepole pine*)

Moderate charring – with moderate charring, all bark is blackened but the bark characteristics remain. (*Must directly sample to determine cambium status except for lodgepole pine and Douglas-fir; assume cambium is dead for moderately charred quadrants on lodgepole pine; assume cambium is alive for moderately charred quadrants on Douglas-fir*)

Deep charring – with deep charring, all the bark is blackened and bark characteristics are no longer discernable. (*Assume cambium is dead*)

Evaluation of Red Turpentine Beetle Activity



Figure 7. Red turpentine beetle pitch tubes.

Determine the simple presence or absence of red turpentine beetle pitch tubes (Figure 7) on yellow and sugar pine. The density or percent coverage of attacks around the bole is not a concern. The importance of this variable depends on the timing of the fire and the subsequent level of red turpentine beetle activity and is only used when significant activity is detected. FHP personnel can assist with this determination. Even though the presence of red turpentine beetle pitch tubes is used as criterion in some of the pine guidelines, it should not be used exclusively to mark trees for removal (see top of page 8).

Determining what variables to use when marking trees

Managers need to determine how much time is available for assessing each tree. The most accurate marking guidelines (requiring the most time) assess crown injury, cambium injury and red turpentine beetle (RTB) activity (for yellow and sugar pine). At a minimum, a crown injury assessment is required for all species. Assessing cambium injury and/or RTB activity (for yellow and sugar pine) requires additional time per tree but does provide a slight increase in accuracy for white fir, sugar pine and yellow pine. In general, if managers choose to only assess crown injury and the fire resulted in cambium kill ratings >2 on most trees, mortality will be under predicted. The opposite is true if the fire resulted in cambium kill ratings of ≤ 2 on most trees, as mortality will then be over predicted (this varies by tree species). Mortality could also be under or over predicted if RTB activity is not assessed (depends of level of post-fire RTB activity). Knowledge of fire behavior, pre-fire fuel conditions and post-fire RTB activity will help to determine the value of assessing for these variables.

Selecting the predicted probability of mortality (Pm) level that will meet land management objectives

The probability of mortality (Pm) levels incorporated into the guidelines are thresholds where all trees meeting or exceeding a selected Pm level are marked for removal. Providing a range of Pm levels afford land managers more options to meet post-fire management objectives. The number of trees removed from a project area will generally vary with different Pm levels; fewer trees will be marked at higher Pm levels (a more conservative mark) and more trees will be marked at lower Pm levels (a less conservative mark) (Figure 8). The exact amount of difference in the mark between Pm levels depends on the population of fire-injured trees within the project area. For example, if the project consists primarily of high severity burn areas the number of trees marked for removal will not significantly change with different Pm levels.

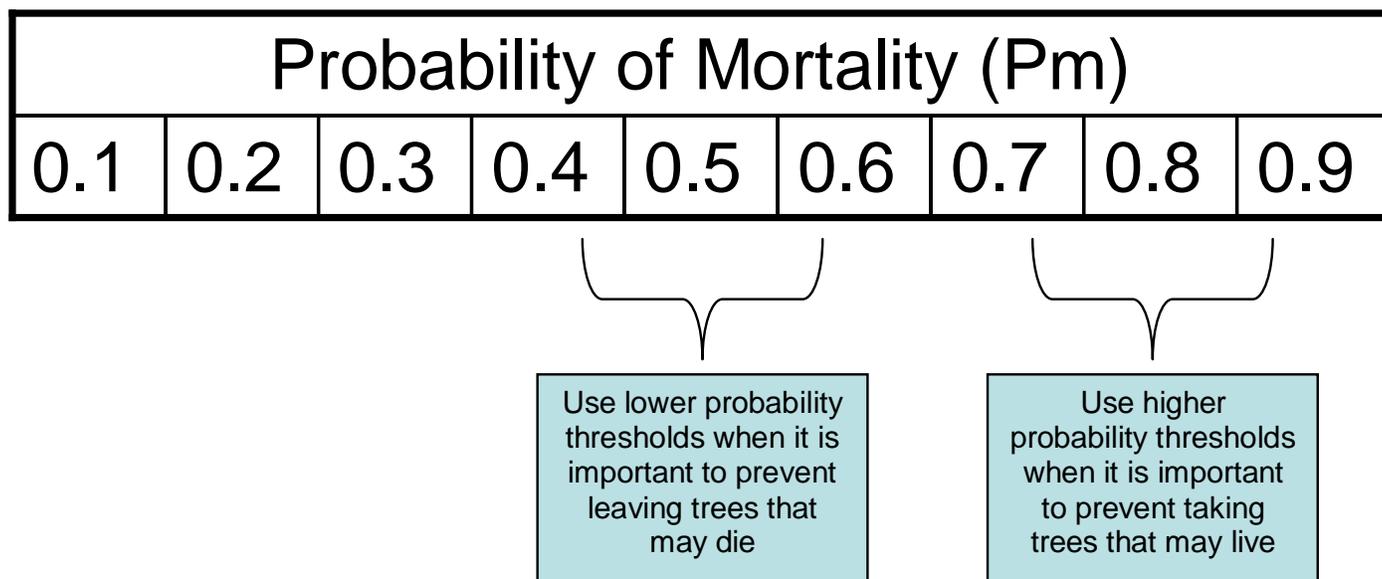


Figure 8. General recommendations based on management objectives for various Pm levels.

The selection of the Pm level should take into consideration the following factors:

- The population of fire-injured trees within the project area [can be based on vegetation burn severity maps showing low, moderate and high severity (Figure 9)]
- Management objectives and desired future conditions
- Number of harvest entries allowed
- Post-salvage fuels objectives
- Snag requirements
- Method of harvest: tractor, helicopter, cable, etc
- Economics and logistics (availability of marking crews and operators, timber values, length of contracts, etc.)
- Reforestation plans: planting and/or natural regeneration
- NEPA process
- Hazard trees
- Environmental conditions (drought, stand density, and beetle activity)

After identifying project-specific objectives, conditions and requirements, land managers should be able to determine which Pm level, or levels (more than one may be selected), will best meet their needs. Consultation with Forest Health Protection staff and other land managers that have implemented projects using these guidelines can greatly assist in making a Pm selection. It is also recommended that land managers document the rationale used to make Pm level selections for future reference.

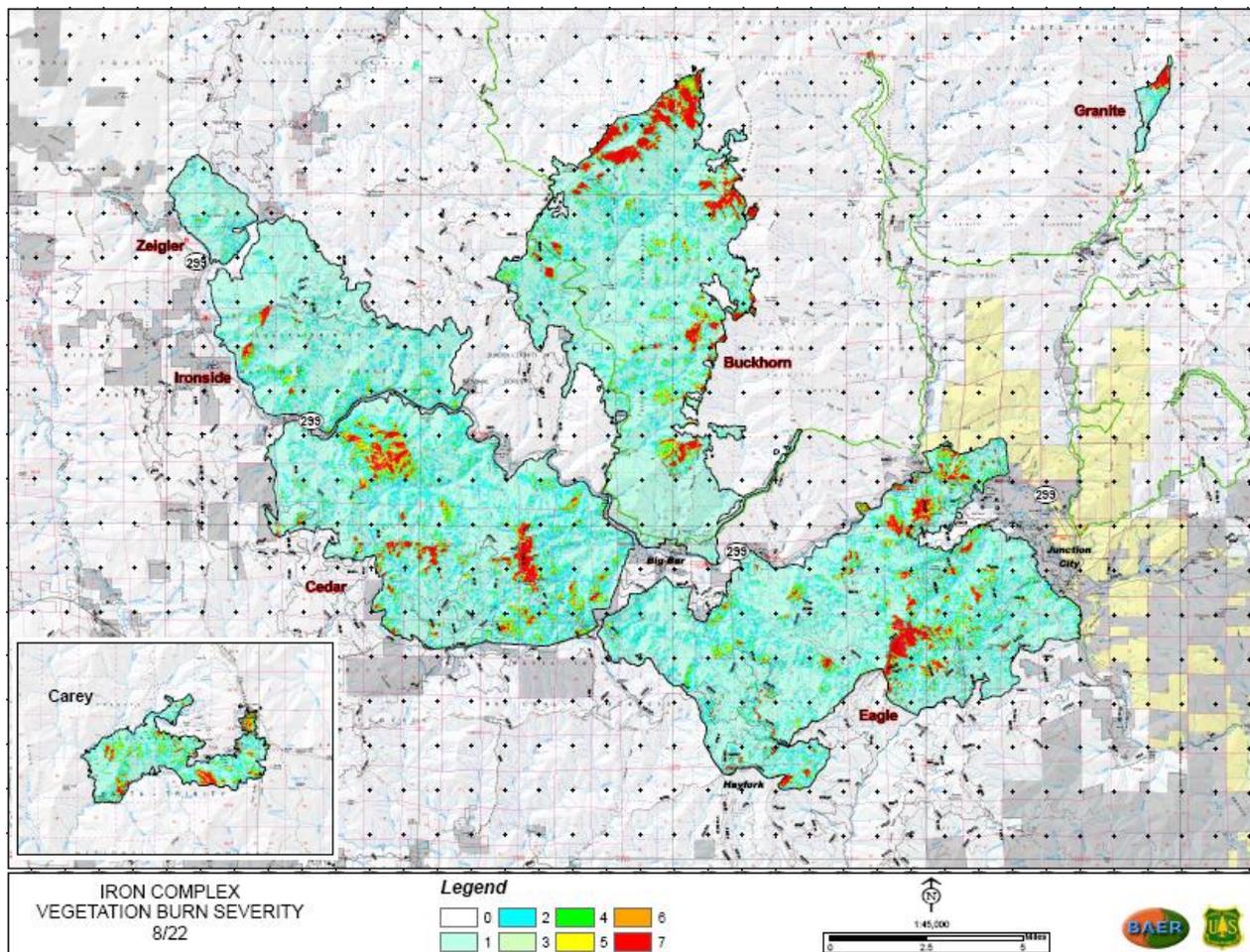


Figure 9. Vegetation Burn Severity Map.

MARKING GUIDELINES FOR FIRE-INJURED TREES

Evidence of significant bark and/or wood boring beetle activity

(Any tree meeting this criteria is predicted to die and no further assessment is required)

Trees should be marked for removal if any combination of the following factors are present over at least 1/3 of the bole circumference: 1) pitch tubes with pink or reddish boring dust associated with them (not clear pitch streamers); 2) pouch fungus conks and/or current woodpecker activity (holes into the sapwood and/or bark flaking, specifically excludes injury caused by sapsucker feeding); 3) boring dust or frass (in bark crevices, webbing along the bole, or that accumulates at the base of the trees). This specifically excludes basal attacks by the red turpentine beetle (large pitch tubes associated with coarse boring dust generally restricted to the lower 2 to 3 feet of the bole or woodpecker activity restricted to this area)* and when the above indicators are only associated with wounds, old fire scars, etc. (Cluck 2008)

*The presence or absence of red turpentine beetle pitch tubes are incorporated into the yellow pine marking guidelines in Tables 2a and 2b.

YELLOW PINE

Table 1 or Tables 2a and 2b are to be used when evaluating trees *post-bud break*.
Table 3 is used when evaluating trees *pre-bud break*.

Table 1. YELLOW PINE: percent crown length killed (PCLK) and DBH (use *post-bud break*)*

- Use Table 1 when only assessing crown injury.

Probability of mortality (Pm)	.10	.20	.30	.40	.50	.60	.70	.80	.90
DBH	Percent crown length killed (PCLK)								
10 - <30"	25	35	40	45	50	55	60	65	70
30 - 40"	--	5	10	15	25	30	40	45	60
>40 - 50"	--	--	--	5	10	15	25	30	45

Table 2a. YELLOW PINE: PCLK, DBH and red turpentine beetle pitch tubes PRESENT*

- Use Tables 2a and 2b when assessing crown injury and red turpentine beetle presence/absence
Note: Use of this guideline is appropriate when significant red turpentine beetle activity is detected. FHP personnel can assist with this determination.

Probability of mortality (Pm)	.10	.20	.30	.40	.50	.60	.70	.80	.90
DBH	Percent crown length killed (PCLK)								
10 - <30"	10	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65
30 - 40"	--	--	--	--	--	5	10	15	25
>40 - 50"	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	5	10

YELLOW PINE (continued)

Table 2b. YELLOW PINE: PCLK, DBH and red turpentine beetle pitch tubes ABSENT*

Probability of mortality (Pm)	.10	.20	.30	.40	.50	.60	.70	.80	.90
DBH	Percent crown length killed (PCLK)								
10 - <30"	30	35	50	55	60	65	70	75	80
30 - 40"	5	10	20	25	30	40	45	55	65
>40 - 50"	--	--	--	5	10	15	25	35	45

* When the cambium kill rating (CKR) is determined for **yellow pine, post-bud break**, use the following percent crown length killed adjustments for Tables 1, 2a and 2b: For yellow pine **10 - <30" dbh**, *add* 5 percentage points when CKR = 0 or 1, *no change* when CKR = 2, and *subtract* 10 percentage points when CKR = 3 or 4. For yellow pine **>30" dbh**, *add* 5 percentage points when CKR = 0 or 1, *no change* when CKR = 2, and *subtract* 5 percentage points when CKR = 3 or 4.

Table 3: YELLOW PINE: percent crown length scorched (PCLS) and DBH (use pre-bud break)*

- *Note: The red turpentine beetle guideline is not used in the pre-bud break model*

Probability of mortality (Pm)	.10	.20	.30	.40	.50	.60	.70	.80	.90
DBH	Percent crown length scorched (PCLS)								
10 - <30"	50	50	70	75	80	85	90	95	100
30 - 40"	10	25	35	40	45	55	60	70	80
>40 - 50"	--	10	15	20	30	35	40	50	65

* When the cambium kill rating (CKR) is determined for **yellow pine, pre-bud break**, use the following percent crown length scorched adjustments for Table 3: For yellow pine **10 - <30" dbh**, *add* 15 percentage points when CKR = 0, *add* 10 percentage points when CKR = 1, *no change* when CKR = 2, *subtract* 10 percentage points when CKR = 3 and *subtract* 15 percentage points when CKR = 4. For yellow pine **>30" dbh**, *add* 5 percentage points when CKR = 0, *no change* when CKR = 1, *subtract* 5 percentage points when CKR = 2, and *subtract* 10 percentage points when CKR = 3 or 4.

INCENSE CEDAR

Table 4: INCENSE CEDAR - percent crown length killed (PCLK)*

Probability of mortality (Pm)	.10	.20	.30	.40	.50	.60	.70	.80	.90
DBH	Percent crown length killed (PCLK)								
10 - 60"	65	70	75	80	85	85	90	90	95

* Cambium sampling is not recommended for incense cedar.

SUGAR PINE

Table 5: SUGAR PINE - percent crown length killed (PCLK)*

- Use Table 1 when only assessing crown injury.

Probability of mortality (Pm)	.10	.20	.30	.40	.50	.60	.70	.80	.90
DBH	Percent crown length killed (PCLK)								
10 – 60”	--	30	40	50	50	55	60	65	70

Table 6a: SUGAR PINE - PCLK and red turpentine beetle pitch tubes PRESENT*

- Use Tables 6a and 6b when assessing crown injury and red turpentine beetle presence/absence
Note: Use of this guideline is appropriate when significant red turpentine beetle activity is noted. FHP personnel can assist with this determination.

Probability of mortality (Pm)	.10	.20	.30	.40	.50	.60	.70	.80	.90
DBH	Percent crown length killed (PCLK)								
10 – 60”	--	--	--	30	40	45	55	60	65

Table 6b: SUGAR PINE - PCLK and red turpentine beetle pitch tubes ABSENT*

Probability of mortality (Pm)	.10	.20	.30	.40	.50	.60	.70	.80	.90
DBH	Percent crown length killed (PCLK)								
10 – 60”	30	45	55	60	60	65	70	75	80

* When the cambium kill rating (CKR) is determined for **sugar pine**, use the following percent crown kill adjustments for Tables 5, 6a and 6b: *Add* 5 percentage points when CKR = 0 - 3 and *subtract* 20 percentage points when CKR = 4.

WHITE FIR

Table 7. WHITE FIR: percent crown length killed (PCLK) and DBH * °

Probability of mortality (Pm)	.10	.20	.30	.40	.50	.60	.70	.80	.90
DBH	Percent crown length killed (PCLK)								
10 - 35”	50	60	65	70	75	80	80	85	90
>35 - 60”	--	35	45	50	60	65	70	75	80

* When the cambium kill rating (CKR) is determined for **white fir**, use the following percent crown kill adjustments for Table 7: *Subtract* 5 percentage points when CKR = 1 or 2, *subtract* 10 percentage points when CKR = 3 or 4 and *no change* when CKR = 0.

° FHP monitoring of fire-injured **white fir** revealed high levels of decay developing where significant cambium kill occurred at the root collar and on the bole. A portion of these decayed trees failed during the five-year period while still retaining green foliage. Land managers should be aware that even though true firs with high levels of cambium kill have a high probability of survival they may become hazards to people or property (Cluck 2005).

RED FIR

Table 8. RED FIR: percent crown length killed (PCLK) °

Probability of mortality (Pm)	.10	.20	.30	.40	.50	.60	.70	.80	.90
DBH	Percent crown length killed (PCLK)								
6 – 40"	--	40	45	65	70	75	80	85	95

° FHP monitoring of fire-injured **red fir** revealed high levels of decay developing where significant cambium kill occurred at the root collar and on the bole. A portion of these decayed trees failed during the five-year period while still retaining green foliage. Land managers should be aware that even though true firs with high levels of cambium kill have a high probability of survival they may become hazards to people or property (Cluck 2005).

DOUGLAS-FIR (Hood 2008)

Table 9. DOUGLAS-FIR: percent crown volume killed (PCVK), and DBH *

- This guideline uses *percent crown volume killed* (not percent crown length killed). Visually estimate the volumetric proportion of crown killed compared to the space occupied by the pre-fire crown volume to the nearest five percent (Ryan 1982).

Probability of mortality (Pm)	.10	.20	.30	.40	.50	.60	.70	.80	.90
DBH	Percent crown length killed (PCLK)								
4 – 40"	--	10	25	55	65	70	75	80	90

* When the cambium kill rating (CKR) is determined for **Douglas-fir**, use the following percent crown kill adjustments for Table 9: *Add 5 percentage points when CKR = 0, no change when CKR = 1, subtract 5 percentage points when CKR = 2, subtract 10 percentage points when CKR = 3, subtract 20 percentage points when CKR = 4.*

LOGEPOLE PINE (Ryan and Reinhardt 1988)

Table 10. LOGEPOLE PINE: percent crown volume killed (PCVK) and DBH

- This guideline uses *percent crown volume killed* (not percent crown length killed). Visually estimate the volumetric proportion of crown killed compared to the space occupied by the pre-fire crown volume to the nearest five percent (Ryan 1982).

Probability of mortality (Pm)	.10	.20	.30	.40	.50	.60	.70	.80	.90
DBH	Percent crown volume killed (PCVK)								
≤10"	-	-	-	-	-	5	30	40	55
>10 - 15"	-	-	-	-	20	35	45	55	70
>15 – 20"	-	-	-	25	35	40	50	60	70

All lodgepole pine, regardless of diameter, are predicted to die if all bole quadrants have moderate or deep char as defined by Ryan (1982) (Hood 2006).

Sheri Smith
Forest Health Protection
Regional Entomologist
2550 Riverside Drive
Susanville, CA 96130
530-252-6667
ssmith@fs.fed.us

Danny Cluck
Forest Health Protection
NESA Entomologist
2550 Riverside Drive
Susanville, CA 96130
530-252-6431
dcluck@fs.fed.us

Citation: Smith, S.L. and D.R. Cluck. 2011. *Marking guidelines for fire-injured trees in California*. US Forest Service, Forest Health Protection, Region 5, Susanville, CA. Report # RO-11-01. 13 p.

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Hood, S.M., S.L. Smith, and D.R. Cluck. 2007. *Delayed conifer tree mortality following fire in California*. In: Powers, Robert F., tech. editor. Restoring fire-adapted ecosystems: proceedings of the 2005 national silviculture workshop. Gen. Tech. Rep. PSW-GTR-203, Albany, CA: Pacific Southwest Research Station, Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture: p. 261-283.

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REGION 5 FOREST HEALTH PROTECTION SERVICE AREA STAFF

Northern CA (National Forests: Klamath, Mendocino, Shasta-Trinity, Six Rivers)

Plant Pathologist: Pete Angwin
(530) 226-2436
e-mail: pangwin@fs.fed.us

Entomologist: Cynthia Snyder
(530) 226-2437
e-mail : clsnyder@fs.fed.us

Northeastern CA (National Forests: Lassen, Modoc, Plumas, Tahoe)

Plant Pathologist: Bill Woodruff
(530) 252-6680
e-mail: wwoodruff@fs.fed.us

Entomologist: Danny Cluck
530-252-6431
e-mail: dcluck@fs.fed.us

Entomologist: Amanda Garcia-Grady
530-252-6675
e-mail: amandagarcia@fs.fed.us

South Sierra (National Forests: Eldorado, Inyo, LTBMU, Sequoia, Sierra, Stanislaus)

Plant Pathologist: Martin MacKenzie
(209) 532 3671 ext 242
e-mail: mmackenzie@fs.fed.us

Entomologist: Beverly M. Bulaon
(209) 532-3671 x323
e-mail: bbulaon@fs.fed.us

Southern CA (National Forests: Angeles, Cleveland, Los Padres, San Bernardino)

Plant Pathologist: Paul Zambino
(909) 382-2727
e-mail: pzambino@fs.fed.us

Entomologist: Tom Coleman
(909) 382-2871
e-mail: twcoleman@fs.fed.us

Appendix A: Project specific guideline example

Marking Guidelines for Fire-injured Trees: Scorch Fire Salvage Project

Guideline Objectives: These guidelines will provide a means to identify and remove trees that were killed or severely injured as a result of fire and/or insect attack within the Scorch Fire, California Ranger District.

These guidelines are based on the fire injured tree marking guidelines developed by Region 5 Forest Health Protection (Report #RO-11-01, Smith and Cluck, May 2011). The guideline criteria (#3) for delayed conifer tree mortality are based on the post-bud break model (% crown length killed) for yellow pine, and the white fir and red fir models (% crown length killed). A probability of mortality of 0.7 ($P_m=0.7$) was selected for this project to meet the management objectives of: 1) removing trees that were killed or that have a high probability of mortality to recover their economic value; and 2) retaining those trees that have a moderate to high probability of survival to provide forest cover as a seed source for natural regeneration and wildlife habitat. **All trees >40" dbh, regardless of condition, will be retained to provide for wildlife except when they pose a hazard to people or property.**

Note: The Smith and Cluck 2011 guidelines also discuss the evaluation of cambium injury (for yellow pine, sugar pine and white fir) for adjusting crown kill marking criteria. The Scorch Fire Salvage Project marking guidelines **DO NOT** include cambium sampling for this purpose due to the additional time required to assess individual trees and the minimal loss of accuracy incurred by dropping this variable.

Mark for removal any tree that meets the following criteria:

1. Any tree with no green needles (does not include those designated for snag retention).
2. For all species, trees should be marked for removal if any combination of boring dust or frass (in bark crevices, webbing along the bole, or that accumulates at the base of the trees), pitch tubes with pink or reddish boring dust associated with them, pouch fungus conks and/or current woodpecker activity (holes into the sapwood and/or bark flaking, specifically excludes injury caused by sapsucker feeding) is present over at least 1/3 of the bole circumference. This specifically excludes basal attacks by the red turpentine beetle on pines (large pitch tubes associated with coarse boring dust generally restricted to the lower 2 to 3 feet of the bole or woodpecker activity restricted to this area) and when the above indicators are only associated with wounds, old fire scars, etc. The presence or absence of red turpentine beetle pitch tubes will be accounted for in criteria #3.
3. Any tree that meets or exceeds the following fire-injured conifer mortality guidelines (Table 1) at the $P_m = 0.7$ level. This assessment will be made by visually estimating the percent of the original pre-fire crown length that was killed (yellow and sugar pine, white and red fir), the presence or absence of red turpentine beetle pitch tubes (yellow and sugar pine) and tree diameter (yellow pine and white fir).

Table 1: Specific criteria for marking fire-injured trees at the Pm = 0.7 level.

Yellow Pine – Red turpentine beetle absent	
DBH	Minimum % Crown Length Killed
10 - <30"	70
30 - 40"	45
Yellow Pine – Red turpentine beetle present	
DBH	Minimum % Crown Length Killed
10 - <30"	55
30 - 40"	10
Sugar Pine – Red turpentine beetle absent	
DBH	Minimum % Crown Length Killed
10-40"	70
Sugar Pine – Red turpentine beetle present	
DBH	Minimum % Crown Length Killed
10-40"	55
White fir	
DBH	Minimum % Crown Length Killed
10 - 35"	80
>35 - 40"	70
Red fir	
DBH	Minimum % Crown Length Killed
10-40"	80

References for Scorch Fire Salvage Marking Guidelines

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