

Tree reduction projects in progress

By **PAT GALLEGOS**

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On Thursday evening, April 21 at Foothill Elementary School, the Fresno County Sheriff's Department hosted a community meeting concerning tree mortality in the Sierras. Some 100 or more interested people attended.

Cal Fire's Planning and Protection Chief, Jim McDougald, gave a PowerPoint overview of the tree reduction projects in the community, including where they are located and who is doing the work. According to McDougald, over 29 million trees have died from bug kill in 2015.

The drought has weakened the trees, making them unable to defend themselves against the bugs that burrow into the tree to lay their eggs. Larvae feed on the living cambium between the bark and wood portion of the tree, cutting off its ability to transport nutrients and water.

This epidemic is unprecedented and expected to last three to five years after the drought ends. Dead trees create a fire danger, and

property owners are urged to clear around their home better and make their defensible space wider. Remove dead trees and thin as much as you can.

Daniel Tune, Forest Service Fire Prevention, talked about the importance of protecting homes and the infrastructure. The ingress and egress to an area is important for evacuation and firefighting equipment. He noted that dead trees falling across the roadway could hamper evacuation efforts.

Lt. Hernandez, Fresno County Sheriff's Area 4 Commander, spoke about their responsibility in giving evacuation warnings and preparing residents to leave the area. He said that ID would be required to enter your home area.

The American Red Cross presented information about shelters and advised people to come to them. Naomi Flam from the Central California Animal Disaster Team

gave information about what to do with your pets and large animals. Ken Austin of Fresno County of Emergency Services spoke briefly, saying that roadways being kept clear for emergencies is a high priority.

A question-and-answer session followed all presentations. One part-time resident of Shaver Lake said, "We have learned a lot here. People are thinking about this problem—folks living in the valley just don't know what's going on."

For more information go to "prepareforbarkbettle.org"

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