



REGIONAL PARK AND OPEN SPACE DISTRICT Policy and Procedure Manual



Policy 7.16

Tree Maintenance

I. POLICY

It is the policy of Riverside County Regional Park and Open-Space District to provide guidelines to preserve and protect trees, and to promote a healthy and safe environment within park facilities. This policy is based on national standards for tree care established by the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA), the National Arborist Association, and the American National Standards Institute.

II. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish standards for tree maintenance including removal, trimming/pruning, and planting/reforestation in all properties managed by RivCoParks staff, including regional parks, interpretive sites, and open-space areas approved for public use. Regular assessments, pruning, and maintenance will ensure that trees that may pose a danger to people, pets, structures, and other property are removed or trimmed in a timely manner. Specific tree care and pruning guidelines and methods are included in the Urban Forestry Standard Operating Procedures Manual.

III. PROCEDURE

1. The following priority assessment and zone levels have been established to provide guidance to District staff and volunteers when evaluating trees:

Priority Levels

- a. Immediate Danger-
 - i. Branches, limbs, or trees in direct contact with powerlines.
 - ii. Fallen tree or limb resting on a campsite, bench, structure or vehicle.
 - iii. Dead branches or limbs larger than 2 inches in diameter on trees within Zones 1 and 2.
 - iv. Branches, limbs, or trees blocking roadways or essential access points.
- b. Potential Hazard-
 - i. Branches, limbs, or trees in close proximity of powerlines.



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- ii. Tree or substantial size limb (2 inches or larger) showing signs of decay, pest infestation, or disease, with the high probability of falling on a campsite, bench, structure, vehicle, roadway, or essential access point (Zones 1 and 2).
- c. Low Potential-
 - i. No visual tree limb hazards, decay, pest infestation, or signs of disease.
 - ii. Trees outside of Zones 1 and 2.

Trees determined to be an **Immediate Danger** to people and property shall be secured by District staff and caution tape or other approved physical barrier installed to prevent access into the area. Staff will coordinate with a contracted certified arborist to remove or trim the hazardous tree, when trained park staff are unavailable, or when in conflict with Section III.6.

Trees determined to be a **Potential Hazard** to people and property shall be reevaluated by a contracted certified arborist to determine if the tree needs to be removed or trimmed. Site Supervisor or District staff shall determine if the access to the area needs to be prevented by installing caution tape, physical barriers, or other protective measures.

2. Tree Risk Assessment

a. **Level 1:** *Limited Visual Tree Risk Assessment*

This is used when the tree will be viewed from a defined, limited perspective. Assessment can be conducted while on foot patrol or by vehicle.

b. **Level 2:** *Basic Tree Risk Assessment*

This level involves looking at the tree's roots, trunk, and crown to detect structural defects, presence of pests, and/or disease. It is a 360-degree, ground-based visual observation of the tree.

c. **Level 3:** *Advanced Tree Risk Assessment*

This level is any assessment in excess of level 2 and may include tissue testing,



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drone inspection and resistance drilling. This level shall be completed by a certified arborist.

Level 1 tree risk assessments are to be conducted monthly by District staff during general site assessments. Level 2 tree risk assessments are to be conducted biannually or more as needed based upon Level 1 inspection results by appropriately trained District staff or a certified arborist. All assessments in excess of Level 2 will be evaluated by a contracted certified arborist once every five (5) years as needed based upon Level 1 and Level 2 assessment results.

3. Tree Risk Zones

District managed properties shall be assessed based upon the following Tree Risk Zones as depicted in Attachment A:

- a. Zone 1: Areas within the fall zone of trees with high park visitor presence and active or passive recreational use that encourages visitors to gather or sit for longer periods of time. These areas include but are not limited to day use areas and camping sites.
 - b. Zone 2: Areas with high park visitor presence and actively used for visitors passing through and area or intermittent sitting/standing. These areas include but are not limited to trails, roads, and areas immediately around buildings or other built structures (kiosks, etc.).
 - c. Zone 3: Open-space or areas not designed for active use, including natural areas not maintained for recreational activities.
4. On an annual basis, District staff and/or certified arborist shall inventory and assess trees located within Zone 1 and Zone 2 areas utilized by park visitors, adjacent to structures, and near property lines, trails, and roadways. Tree risk assessments including date of observation, observers name, identified hazards, priority ranking, and all other general observations will be documented using the ISA Tree Risk Assessment Form and added to the District Tree Program Database.



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5. Tree trimming will take place on a five (5) year cycle unless a tree priority level has been identified as Immediate Danger or Potential Hazard. Trimming shall be in accordance with ISA standards to protect the overall health of the tree.
6. District staff shall not fell trees greater than 24" diameter at breast height, pose high failure potential (rot, cracks, unnatural lean or greater than 45 degrees lean) with risk to structures or power lines, or limb branches higher than 12 ft from ground surface.
7. A tree may be removed if determined to be dead, dying, diseased, in danger of falling or uprooting, or recognized as hazardous. Tree removal shall be determined by a licensed contractor, certified arborist, or a designee assigned by a Bureau Chief.
8. District staff are required to wear proper personal protective equipment (PPE) identified in the Cal-OHSA Tree Work Safety Guide including eyes, ears, head, legs, and hands protection.
9. Prior to utilizing tree cutting equipment, District staff must obtain proper safety and equipment operation training approved by a Bureau Chief.
10. Reforestation will take place within all park facilities that have removed trees due to age, pests, fire, or other natural causes and shall be replaced with appropriate species identified as native and are not considered a nuisance. Trees shall be replanted at a 3:1 ratio, a minimum size of 24" box, and with appropriate irrigation. An alternate ratio or size of tree may be approved by the General Manager or designee based upon funding, donations, and/or special programs.

IV. ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A- Tree Risk Zones Visual Example



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TREE RISK ZONES



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Original Issue Date: 8/3/2023

Office of Primary Responsibility: Parks and Resources

Editor: Williams, Robert, Chief – Business Operations

Reviewed by: McLain, Dustin, Chief – Parks and Resources

Approved by: Brown, Kyla, R., General Manager

Date Approved: 8/3/2023

Previous Revision Dates: *N/A*