



Fire Impacted Hazard Tree Advisory

Massachusetts

April 19, 2025



Subject: Increased level of standing dead trees (SNAG TREES) actively burning on most wildfires across the state during this spring fire season.

Discussion: State DCR Fire Managers and local fire response agencies have reported a significant increase in actively burning standing dead snags on wildfire incidents during the spring fire season. An area of concern is the stands of dead oaks which are still standing after repeated years of defoliation and repeated droughts. Due to the severe fall drought of 2024, and low recovery of fuel moisture, these large standing dead fuels are receptive to burning. Numerous fire incidents report dead snags burning 10' to 40' up the main bole of the stems, as well as burning through the trees at ground level rendering them unstable and falling with little warning. Snags may burn through more quickly than green trees and can fall without warning. **This situation has created a heightened firefighter safety concern for all firefighters in areas with dead standing trees.**



Difference from Normal Conditions: Although dead snags are always a concern for firefighters on wildland fires, the extended drought stresses from last fall and the abnormal conditions coming out of winter, continue to significantly increase safety risk to firefighters on ALL active wildfire incidents.

Concerns to Firefighters and the Public: Snag trees pose inherent risk to both firefighters and the public. Fire activity and its impact increase the risk by continuing to weaken these trees, and having increased numbers of firefighters exposed to the risk on any typical fire response.

Mitigation Measures:

- Identify, communicate, establish, and monitor No-Work-Zones high-risk areas.
- Ensure all firefighters are wearing proper PPE, including hard hats or helmets.
- If using sawyers, use only experienced sawyers based on the complexity of the hazard.
- Consider indirect tactics that avoid high risk zones and snags all together.
- Plan quick and safe escape routes.
- Minimize exposure time at the stump by employing efficient felling procedures.
- Minimize impacts to the hazard tree from wedge pounding or other felling operations in the area.
- Do not turn your back on a falling tree or known hazard.
- Use lookouts and safety officers to maintain secure snag felling operations.

Please give wide distribution to all Fire Agencies and Personnel

**Massachusetts DCR Bureau of Forest Fire Control & Forestry
And
Massachusetts Department of Fire Services**