

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Federal Emergency Management Agency
Transitional Recovery Office
#1 Seine Court, Suite 109
New Orleans, Louisiana 70114



FEMA

October 18, 2006

Col. Tom Kirkpatrick
State Coordinating Officer
State of Louisiana
415 North 15th Street
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

RE: FEMA DR-1603-LA & DR-1607-LA
Removal of Salt Water Damaged Trees
From Private Property

Dear Col. Kirkpatrick:

The following *Guidance for Removal of Trees Damaged by Salt Water Inundation* was developed by FEMA specifically for Louisiana coastal parishes (to include St. Tammany Parish) and addresses removal of trees from private property if those trees were damaged or killed as a result of salt water intrusion and if they pose an immediate threat to public health and safety:

Guidance for Removal of Trees Damaged by Salt Water Inundation

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita caused storm surge and flooding in many of the Louisiana coastal Parishes. In some areas, it took several days for the salt water from the Gulf of Mexico to recede or to be pumped from inside the areas protected by levees. This salt water intrusion damaged and killed vegetation. Trees that did not survive the salt water intrusion are now deteriorating, dropping large branches, splitting, and falling over. FEMA has recognized that these trees create an immediate threat to public health and safety and improved property by authorizing their removal on the public rights of way (ROWs) and in public areas.

Further assessments in the flooded areas indicate that salt water damaged trees are also a significant threat on private property for the same reasons. FEMA authorizes the removal of these trees on private property subject to the guidance and eligibility criteria set forth below.

- 1) Assessments and operations for removal of salt water damaged trees on private property will be limited to those coastal parishes (including St. Tammany Parish) that have been approved for private property debris removal operations, and further limited within these

parishes to only those areas that were impacted by storm surge and resulting floods. GIS mapping of flooded areas can be used to determine areas eligible for assessment work and subsequent removal operations.

- 2) For property owners who elect to have qualifying trees removed, current right of entry (ROE) programs can be utilized to enter properties for assessments and work.
- 3) Trees eligible for removal must meet at least one of the following criteria:
 - (a) Trees will be standing dead or deteriorated trees that create an immediate threat to property owners and residential structures in commonly used areas of the property. Commonly used areas include the property immediately surrounding the residence, detached structures, and driveways and roads leading to the residence.
 - (b) Only those trees which can drop branches, collapse, and/or reach by falling onto residential structures and commonly used areas will be eligible. Residential structures include garages and carports.
 - (c) Trees from agricultural lands and unimproved private property are not included unless the trees threaten the residence and commonly used areas.
- 4) Trees that are determined to be eligible should be either flush cut or cut as low as possible. Stump removal is not eligible.
- 5) Small trees and shrubs are not eligible as these do not cause an immediate threat.

This guidance is issued as a supplement to existing FEMA policy for removal of trees, including the requirement that only those trees inspected and approved for removal by FEMA will be considered for cost reimbursement.

Please do not hesitate to call if you need additional information.



James Stark
Director
Louisiana Transitional Recovery Office

Cc: John Connolly – PAO