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NEWS

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Beetle-Kill Trees Falling Faster Every Day

GRANBY, Colo. – Lodgepole pines in beetle-kill areas are falling at an increasing rate, based on observations from foresters in Grand County. The falling trees pose an imminent threat to outdoor enthusiasts, mountain homeowners and those working outside this summer.

“Beetle-killed trees are really starting to fall,” said Ron Cousineau, Colorado State Forest Service district forester for the Granby District. He says thousands of dead lodgepole pines have already fallen this year as their shallow root systems rot away. “It’s happening every day,” he said.

About 80 percent of lodgepole pine trees killed by the mountain pine beetle epidemic in Colorado likely will fall within a decade. Cousineau warns that many live trees also are blowing down in beetle-kill areas because of increased exposure to wind after dead needles fall off surrounding trees. These live trees may suddenly snap along the trunk, which presents a risk to anyone in their vicinity.

“In some beetle-kill areas, we’re seeing almost as many green trees falling as dead trees,” Cousineau said. To adequately address the danger of falling trees in populated areas impacted by pine beetles, he recommends removing green lodgepole pines as well as dead trees.

The CSFS offers the following tips to avoid harm from falling trees:

- Refrain from visiting forested areas in high-wind conditions or when strong winds are forecast.
- Remove standing dead trees in the vicinity of houses and other structures. If cutting operations will expose live trees to the wind, these may also need to be removed.
- If the wind picks up when you are outside, move to a clearing away from dead or exposed trees.
- Locate campsites, parked vehicles and tents well away from dead or exposed trees.
- Steer clear of smaller roads that pass through beetle-kill forests, as trees falling across the road after your passage could block your exit.
- Pack an axe, saw or chainsaw when headed into the backcountry to clear fallen trees from roadways.

The CSFS provides a link to donate to the Colorado Bark Beetle Mitigation Fund at csfs.colostate.edu; donations are used to remove beetle-infested trees on lands owned and managed by the state.

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