

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION



State of California
 The Natural Resources Agency
 California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection

PROJECT TITLE:	Bellevue/Kewin Mill Fuels Reduction Project		
PROJECT LOCATION	T2N, R15E, Sections 11,12 &13; T2N, R16E Section 6 & 7, MDBM	COUNTY	Tuolumne
LEAD AGENCY	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)		
CONTACT	Roger Petersen, Unit Forester CAL FIRE Tuolumne-Calaveras Unit	PHONE	(209) 754-3831
ADDRESS	785 Mountain Ranch Rd., San Andreas, CA 95249		

Project Description: The proposed project will reduce hazardous fuel loading within approximately 300-feet of portions of Kewin Mill Road, Big Hill Road and around Bellevue Elementary School in the Cedar Ridge Area. Both Kewin Mill and Big Hill Road are critical ingress and egress routes for the community. The project area is approximately 145 acres in size. The project area ranges in elevation from approximately 3,200 to 3,600 feet above sea level. Vegetation at the site would best be described as a mixture of Sierra Mixed Conifer and oak woodland. Overstory tree species consist primarily of ponderosa pine, sugar pine, white fir, incense cedar, California black oak, canyon live oak, and interior live oak. Surface and ladder fuels will be reduced or modified by mastication, chipping, or by hand cutting, piling and burning or lopping and scattering. Mastication may be conducted by a variety of track laying type tractors. Hand work for chipping, as well as piling and burning or lopping and scattering will be conducted by hand crews using chainsaws and other hand tools. Trees less than 12-inches in diameter at breast height (dbh), surface fuels and ladder fuels will be treated to achieve a target residual tree spacing of 25 to 30-feet between stems. Residual trees will be pruned to a height of approximately 8 to 10-feet above ground level. Dead trees of any size may be felled and chipped, piled and burned, or masticated. Masticated or chipped material will be left on site. The reduction in vegetation will create a shaded fuel break condition that will minimize fire behavior and create a stand structure that is resistant to stand replacing fires.

EXEMPTION STATUS

- Categorical Exemption Type and Section: Class 4, §15304 Minor Alterations to Land
- Statutory Exemption (state code section):
- Ministerial (§21080(b)(1); 15268)
- Declared Emergency (§21080(b)(3); 15269(a))
- Emergency Project (§21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c))

REASONS PROJECT IS EXEMPT

The class of exemption to be used is 15304- minor alterations to land. The project will consist of removing surface and ladder fuels to maintain a shaded fuel break condition. The project is located in an urban interface area. The project will create a shaded fuel break condition. The project will not involve the removal of mature or scenic trees. Stand health will be improved by removing dead, dying, and suppressed trees and brush, and increasing growing space for mature, healthy dominant and co-dominant trees. Sensitive species will not be impacted by the proposed project. The project was designed to avoid adverse impacts to watercourses. Mastication and chipping will leave a layer of organic material that will provide for excellent erosion control. The project was carefully designed to avoid adverse impacts to archaeological and biological resources. The project was designed to reduce hazardous fuel loading in a strategic area around the community of Cedar Ridge, and will make Tuolumne County more resilient regarding wildfires.

Review by CAL FIRE staff confirmed that no exceptions apply that would preclude the use of a Notice of Exemption for this project. The Department has concluded that no significant environmental impact would occur to aesthetics, agriculture and forestland/timberland, air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, energy, geology and soils, greenhouse gas emissions, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, land use planning, mineral resources, noise, populations and housing, public services, recreation, transportation/ traffic, utilities and service systems, or to wildfire. Documentation of the environmental review completed by the Department is kept on file at the Tuolumne-Calaveras Unit Headquarters in San Andreas.

DATE RECEIVED FOR FILING

DocuSigned by:

 Mike Van Loben Sels, Southern Region Chief Date: 3/10/2026
 California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection