



PRESS RELEASE

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August 11, 2017

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE #2017-02

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Over 360 Dead or Dying Trees Infected by Polyphagous Shot Hole Borer in Laguna Niguel

Laguna Niguel, CA – The polyphagous shot hole borer (PSHB) is an invasive beetle that has infected thousands of trees in Southern California. Laguna Niguel expects to remove approximately 360 infected trees due to this. PSHB causes branches to die and can eventually kill the tree if not treated early. The infestation compromises the structural integrity of the tree, which endangers people and property.

As with many other cities, the City of Laguna Niguel has been forced to remove 306 trees since May 2016. The cost to remove and properly dispose of a tree can range from \$500 to \$1000. There is no effective treatment for severely infested trees. Removal of severely infected trees lessens the immediate safety concerns of fallen branches and trees. In addition, it prevents further spread of the beetles onto other trees. Since the infestation became more apparent in the last several years, the City has received reports of dead foliage and broken tree limbs.

The epidemic has significantly increased tree maintenance costs in addition to unforeseen circumstances including Acts of God and tree-related claims. For instance, heavy rains toppled trees damaging properties and causing injuries last winter. Since 2015, the City spent roughly \$400,000 in tree care above the usual tree maintenance costs.

In June 2016, the City initially focused on Crown Valley Park and the Sea County Senior and Community Center because of the high number of visitors that frequent those facilities. The City's contract arborist determined that between the two sites, of over 800 inventoried trees, roughly half of them were on the host list for PSHB. At Crown Valley Park alone, 35%

of the park's trees were removed (190 removed of 549 total trees) in the past 14 months due to an extreme high level of PSHB infestation.

The City is continuing to monitor and inspect City-owned trees for future treatment and removal. Sycamores, populus canadensis, alders, and London plane trees are among the hardest hit species.

Community members are asked to take precaution and be aware of infected trees prone to collapsing either near their homes or as they visit parks or walk trails. Recently, a City inspector encountered a near miss when a sycamore tree spontaneously fell without warning while he was inspecting a grove of trees. There is a real possibility that all sycamore trees will succumb to the beetle infestation and ultimately will require full removal.



Symptoms of an Infected Sycamore Tree in Laguna Niguel



Infected Tree Bark in Laguna Niguel



Fallen Willow Resulting from Beetle Infestation in Laguna Niguel



Snapped Willow Tree at La Paz Sports Park

As part of the City's reforestation plan, the goal will be to replace lost trees with a diverse range of trees resistant to attacks by the beetles. At this time, the City has allocated \$200,000 in the current fiscal year's budget to purchase additional trees and plant them. The selected contractor is expected to begin planting new trees this winter when the climate is more ideal. Cooler temperatures and potential rainfall will help establish the new plants.

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