

# Dead forests create gold rush for tree cutters

By Thomas Curwen, Los Angeles Times

A low gargle echoes against granite cliffs and resounds in the wooded canyons.

Each pull of a starter handle and squeeze of a throttle is punctuated by the crack of splintering wood as another dead tree falls in a forest that's changing all too rapidly.

Estimates by the U.S. Forest Service put the number of dead trees in California forests at 102 million, broad swaths that officials call a wildfire and public safety risk. Declaring a state of emergency last fall when the count stood at 40 million, Gov. Jerry Brown ordered state agencies to clear the hazards.

"There is a Gold Rush for those of us who are willing to bust ass," says Niles Kant, who charges \$1,700 a day for his services.

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