

CRITICAL AREAS

CHAPTER 16.51 - GENERAL PROVISIONS FOR CRITICAL AREAS

16.51.125 VEGETATION REMOVAL PERMIT

A. Vegetation and tree removal from a critical area or its management zone must be approved by the Director. An application must include the following information:

1. The applicant must submit a report from a certified arborist or professional forester that documents the hazard and provides a pruning plan or replanting plan for the replacement trees and vegetation. Report must be prepared by a professional unaffiliated with the company proposing to remove the tree(s).
2. Tree pruning is preferred over felling. Pruning includes the removal of a hazardous branch; crown thinning or crown reduction. When pruning is insufficient to address the hazard, then trees should be removed as justified by a qualified professional.
 - a. Tree topping is prohibited. Topping is the cutting of tree branches to stubs or to lateral branches that are not large enough to assume the terminal role.
 - b. Reduction. Reduction reduces the size of a tree, often for utility line clearance. Reducing a tree's spread is best accomplished by pruning back the leaders and branch terminals to secondary branches that are large enough to assume the terminal roles. Compared to topping, reduction helps maintain the form and structural integrity of the tree.
 - c. Crown cleaning and thinning. Proper pruning opens the foliage of a tree, reduces weight on heavy limbs, removes dead branches, and helps retain the tree's natural shape and height.

B. Mitigation Required. The landowner shall replace trees that are felled with new trees at a ratio of two replacement trees for each tree felled within one year in accordance with an approved restoration plan.

1. Tree species that are native and indigenous to the site and a minimum caliper of two inches shall be used.

2. If a tree to be removed provides critical habitat, such as an eagle perch, a qualified wildlife biologist shall be consulted to determine timing and methods of removal that will minimize impacts.

C. Hazard trees determined to pose an imminent threat or danger to public health or safety, or to public or private property, or serious environmental degradation, may be removed by the landowner prior to receiving written approval from the city; provided, that within fourteen days following such action, the landowner shall submit a proof of hazard (e.g. photos) together with a restoration plan that demonstrates compliance with these provisions.

Revision Note: Substantial portions of this new section were previously located at CMC Section 16.51.120 (C.5.b).