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Can Hazard Trees Be Removed from Critical Areas or Critical Area Buffers?

Vegetation within critical areas and critical area buffers is generally protected. However, pursuant to [SMC 16.15.050\(8\)\(b\)](#), a hazard tree can be removed immediately if removal will prevent imminent danger or hazard to persons or property.

If this is clearly the case, the hazardous tree should be snagged to a safe height, and the removed portions of the tree should be dropped into the critical area and/or surrounding protected buffer area where they can provide woody structures for wildlife habitat. The method by which the tree is removed should minimize intrusion into, and impacts to, the critical area and surrounding buffer areas. Any critical area or associated buffer areas that are disturbed by tree removal must be restored, with any damaged vegetation replaced through replanting of similar native vegetation types and densities.

The removed tree must be replaced based on the following replanting chart (SMC 21A.37.280):

| Size of Tree Removed ¹ | Number of Replacement Trees Required |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| Coniferous 8" - 22" Deciduous 12" - 22" ("Significant Tree") | 1 |
| 22" - 32" ("Heritage Tree") | 2 |
| 32" or larger ("Landmark Tree") | 3 |

- Replacement coniferous trees must be at least 8 feet in height.
- Replacement deciduous trees must be at least 2.5 inches in diameter.
- Replacement trees must be primarily native species. Non-native species will be considered at the recommendation of a Certified Arborist, or with City approval.
- Additional tree replacement standards may be found in SMC 21A.37.280.

If it is not a clear emergency situation, a Clear and Grade permit application should be submitted prior to removal of a potential hazard tree that is located in a critical area or critical area buffer. The Clear and Grade permit can be obtained at the City's permit counter or [online](#).

¹ Tree sizes are measured in diameter at 54 inches up from the base