



State of California  
The Natural Resources Agency  
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)

## NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

<b>PROJECT TITLE</b>	Upper Empire Mastication Project		
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>	Portions of T9S, R3W, 26 & Rancho San Vicente, MDBM	<b>COUNTY</b>	Santa Cruz
<b>LEAD AGENCY</b>	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)		
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**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

Over the past year hand crews have created a shaded fuel break on approximately 20 acres within 100 feet or less on portions of Empire Grade Road in northern Santa Cruz County. Of this acreage, up to 1 acre will receive supplemental treatment with a masticator to assist in additional vegetation removal and/or modification of existing cut material. It is anticipated this project will be completed in 1 to 2 hours, prior to April 2014.

The project is located in the Santa Cruz Mountains along a prominent north-south trending ridge named Ben Lomond Mountain that forms the western side of the San Lorenzo Valley. Vegetation in the project area is primarily mixed evergreen with some chaparral species found within small openings in the canopy. Common shrub species include French broom (*Genista monspessulana*) in some disturbed roadside locations, toyon, coffeeberry, coyote brush, ceanothus and manzanita.. Common trees include coast live oak, canyon live oak, tanoak, Douglas-fir, redwood, madrone and California bay laurel.

**EXEMPTION STATUS**

Categorical Exemption Type/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 work proposed is a minor alteration to vegetation which does not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees and is consistent with Categorical Exemption Class 4 - Minor Alterations to Land. No activity is proposed that is listed as a limitation under CCR 15300.2 (a-f).

Field review by CAL FIRE staff confirmed that no exceptions apply which 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, geology and soils, greenhouse gas emissions, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, land use planning, mineral resources, noise, population and housing, public services, recreation, transportation/traffic, or to utilities and service systems. Documentation of the environmental review completed by the Department is kept on file at San Mateo-Santa Cruz Unit Headquarters, 6059 Highway 9, Felton, CA 95018.

**DATE RECEIVED FOR FILING**

RECEIVED

MAR 19 2014

STATE CLEARING HOUSE

Duane Shintaku, Deputy Director    Date 3/19/14  
 California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection