

## PRESS RELEASE

CITY OF MEDICAL LAKE

SUBJECT: MEDICAL LAKE GRAY ROAD FIRE TREE REMOVAL

DATE: October 2, 2023

TIME: 5:00PM

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Thousands of trees were felled by fire fighters and utility workers during the Gray Road Fire response. Due to the sheer volume of burned trees, the City of Medical Lake, Avista, and Gray Fire citizen volunteer groups are committed to assisting Gray Fire homeowners with a no-cost solution to removal and disposal of hazard and unwanted trees. This is a coordinated post-disaster effort including foresters, arborists, loggers, sawyers, heavy equipment, and operators, along with volunteer organizations all working together to remove and dispose of hazardous, risk, or unwanted burned trees. Multiple simultaneous efforts are happening including independent logging, volunteer groups, and Avista Tree Removal.

All trees on private land/lots are the real property of the landowners. Property owners must give express permission before any trees can be removed from private property. Properties larger than 2 acres must have a permit; loggers removing the trees will obtain permits and ownership releases before any work is done. Forms and sign-up sheets are available at City Hall.

**Independent Logging and Group Volunteer Assistance:** If you are a Gray Road fire property owner and want help with the removal of unwanted or felled trees, please contact the City of Medical Lake Emergency Response Team at [ERT@medical-lake.org](mailto:ERT@medical-lake.org) or call **(509) 505-3650** or come by City Hall Annex, 124 S Lefevre St, Medical Lake. The City of Medical Lake is assisting to connect impacted property owners with desired resources. You will be given information about how to get your name on the Tree Removal List which will allow loggers and volunteer groups to enter your property for the purpose of tree removal. You will be contacted for a site-visit to identify trees you want removed. There is no guarantee all trees will be removed; however, every effort will be made to remove as many trees and brush as possible within time and labor constraints. These teams can remove any tree identified by the owner for removal unless it is a standing tree posing risk to Avista powerlines.

**Avista Assistance:** If you are an Avista customer and have questions regarding risk trees on your property that have been cut or you feel still pose a risk, please contact Avista at **1-800-227-9187**.

Avista is committed to providing safe and reliable service in the Medical Lake area following the impacts of the Gray Fire. Part of Avista's commitment to safe operations includes the removal of dead or structurally compromised trees adjacent to Avista distribution lines that pose a fall or risk during future weather events. These trees are referred to as risk trees. Risk trees were assessed prior to removal by certified arborists. Since the fire, crews contracted by Avista have removed over 5,000 risk trees. However, Avista anticipates that additional trees will be identified over the coming months as trees killed by the fire or bark beetles become evident. Typically, risk trees are cut safely and left on site for the homeowner to utilize at their discretion. In this case, due to the high volume of trees cut in response to the fire, Avista is offering assistance with removal and disposal of risk trees to customers that do not wish to keep them. Avista has made attempts to contact all impacted customers in order to receive permission to remove risk trees cut by Avista, and is in the process of staging equipment to begin work this week.

If you are an Inland Power customer and have questions regarding risk trees on your property that have been cut or you feel still pose a risk, please contact Inland Power at **(509) 747-7151**.

**Washington State Department of Natural Resources DNR** can offer advice regarding the prospect of salvage logging but DNR is not paying for salvage logging or general parcel cleanup for aesthetics. DNR offers the following:

- DNR is providing grass seed for erosion and weed control for landowners. Limited to 20 pounds initially.
- DNR is taking order for reforestation assistance, ponderosa pine seedlings in 2025 at the earliest.
- DNR may be able to help with site preparation for reforestation in some select areas of dense residual vegetation.
- DNR is seeking to partner with Spokane County FPD 3 to offer a few “free chipping” days to reduce future potential fire hazard. This is not confirmed yet.
- Landowners can contact **(509) 995-4373** for assistance.