

MANAGING BEETLE-KILLED PINES

Decide what to retain, remove, and handle with care.

A beetle-killed pine can be a safety concern, a source of emerging insects, useful wood, or valuable wildlife habitat. The right choice depends on location, structural condition, beetle activity, and the goals for the surrounding forest.



Begin with the tree's condition and surroundings: what could it strike, is bark beetle activity still present, and can it remain safely?

● REMOVE FIRST

WHERE FAILURE MATTERS

Prioritize dead trees that could strike people, homes, roads, utilities, or access routes.

- ✓ Look for lean, root movement, cracks, broken tops, hanging limbs, and decay.
- ✓ Expect less predictable failure as roots, stems, and branches deteriorate.
- ✓ Use a qualified professional where targets, slope, size, or access add risk.

● RETAIN WISELY

HABITAT WITH SPACE

A sound snag away from important targets can provide nesting, feeding, and shelter.

- ✓ Woodpeckers and other cavity users benefit from standing dead trees.
- ✓ Retain only where a future fall would not threaten people or property.
- ✓ Reinspect as bark drops, cavities enlarge, and decay advances.

● HANDLE THE WOOD

LIMIT BEETLE SPREAD

Freshly infested logs and slash may release beetles that can attack nearby pines.

- ✓ Remove or treat infested material before the next beetle flight.
- ✓ Consider chipping, debarking, solar treatment, or suitable disposal.
- ✓ Do not stack green or infested pine beside healthy conifers.

✓ START HERE

- ✓ Map what each dead tree could strike if the stem, top, or branches fail.
- ✓ Confirm whether bark beetles remain active beneath the bark.
- ✓ Choose removal, habitat retention, or monitoring tree by tree.
- ✓ Plan safe access, wood treatment, disposal, and follow-up inspection.

▲ THE RAVEN WORKS PERSPECTIVE

Thoughtful management does not mean removing every dead tree. Reduce unacceptable hazards, prevent avoidable beetle spread, and retain habitat where natural decay has room. Evaluate each tree in the context of the whole property.

Protect people first. Preserve ecological value where it can remain safely.

Sources: Colorado State Forest Service and CSU Extension guidance.

◎ IN THE FIELD

Three practical realities shape decisions about beetle-killed pines:

TARGETS MATTER

The same dead tree may be acceptable in open forest and unacceptable beside a home or road.

CONDITION CHANGES

A snag that is stable today can weaken as roots decay, bark falls, and cavities enlarge.

TIMING MATTERS

Freshly infested wood may release beetles; older, fully emerged wood presents a different concern.