

## Forest Health Concerns Resulting from Storm-damaged Timber CRSDT070811

**STORM-DAMAGED TIMBER:** Hurricanes, tornadoes, and straight-line winds cause obvious damage to Alabama's forests. Quick removal of damaged timber is highly recommended to prevent further damage from insect, disease, and wildfires. Obviously, the quicker forests are restored, the quicker they become productive again.

Often timber may appear to have survived a storm, but in fact may have been subject to hidden damage that could eventually lead to insect and disease outbreaks, and even mortality. For this reason, forest landowners should request assistance from a registered forester to inspect your damaged forest for additional forest health concerns.



**PINE FORESTS:** Many forest pests attack stressed pines. These include the **Ips engraver beetle**, **black turpentine beetle**, and well-known **southern pine beetle**. They fly from one stressed pine tree to the next, causing serious harm and in many cases mortality.

The **Hylastes beetles** are wood boring insects that attack the roots of stressed or declining pines. These insects are difficult to detect since their attack occurs underground. *Hylastes* beetle infestations are generally not recognized until the infested tree exemplifies declining symptoms – chlorotic needles and a thinning crown. When they bore into the roots, the *Hylastes* beetles vector a fungus that clogs the vascular system and decays the fine feeder roots. Associated with pine decline, this genus of insects can kill numerous pines in several months.

If the population is high, the reproduction weevils (**pales weevil** and **pitch-eating weevil**) can intensify their harm on pines. Quite similar to the black turpentine beetle in their appeal to host trees, these weevils are attracted to the flow of resin from cut stumps or injured pines. The weevils will commune around the base of an injured tree and inhabit fresh pine stumps. If pine seedlings are planted during this heightened population period, they are very vulnerable to attack. Under these conditions, the reproduction weevils can girdle newly planted pine seedlings in an area, killing the entire stand. Foresters recommend waiting an entire season before replanting a site recently harvested to prevent this pest from occurring.



**HARDWOOD FORESTS:** Stressed hardwood trees are just as susceptible to insect and disease attacks as pines. **Oak decline** is a particular disease that weakens hardwoods, which attract several pests over time resulting in the tree's mortality. In the later stages of oak decline, expect infestations of oak borers like the **red oak borer** or the **two-lined chestnut borer**, followed by an infection from wood decaying **fungi**. **Hardwood borers** and **ambrosia beetles** also attack declining hardwoods.

**INVASIVE SPECIES:** Not usually recognized as a pest, some exotic plants invade disturbed sites and create an ecological threat. Ground disturbance from the use of heavy machinery during recovery efforts creates open spaces that are prime habitat for many of Alabama’s most invasive plant species. **Chinese privet, tallotree,** and **mimosa** are some of the main plants that will immediately invade and take over an open disturbed site. The import of landscaping material during road recovery and maintenance may increase the opportunity to introduce non-native species into the area. Rhizomes from **cogongrass** and **golden bamboo** have been transported to new territories by this process.



**GETTING PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANCE:** The best preventative measure is to remove damaged timber as quickly as possible, although it is understood how difficult this can be after a major storm event. Quick identification and control and sustainable forest management that include preventative pest control measures are critical to prevent many of these pests from occurring. Forest landowners should consider getting assistance from a registered forester, either a private consultant, industry forester, Auburn extension agent, or Alabama Forestry Commission professional to ensure your forest is protected. You can locate these professionals through local phone directories or internet sources. Contact your local Alabama Forestry Commission office for contact information or assistance.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCE INFORMATION:** Additional resource information is located on the Alabama Forestry Commission’s website, <http://www.forestry.alabama.gov>. The website includes links to YouTube® videos that provide information on the Ips Engraver, Black Turpentine, and Southern Pine Beetles. Under the Commission’s main page, click on the link “**Insect, Disease, and Invasive Species**” for additional information on the pests mentioned above.

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