

## News Release

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## **GOVERNOR'S ORDER HASTENS TORNADO-DAMAGED TIMBER REMOVAL**

Salvage operations have begun on an estimated 27,000 acres of forestland in southeast Georgia, where recent tornadoes resulted in 16 fatalities and extensive property damage. The storms impacted timber valued in excess of \$41 million, and the Georgia Forestry Commission is assisting landowners and state agencies with assessment and removal of downed and damaged timber.

To facilitate operations, Georgia Governor Nathan Deal has issued an executive order to temporarily lift specific restrictions on logging trucks using state maintained roadways. The order authorizes the Georgia Department of Transportation to issue over-dimensional permits accommodating the movement of vehicles and loads from counties designated by the governor's state of emergency declarations.

"These storm systems caused extensive landowner losses and significant damage to local economies, and we have ongoing concerns regarding forest health and wildfires," said Governor Nathan Deal. "Based on the recommendations of the Georgia Forestry Commission, I have eased restrictions on timber trucks to accommodate the removal of storm-damaged timber in the affected areas. I appreciate the Georgia Forestry Commission's expertise and diligence in assisting all those affected."

The Georgia Forestry Commission is encouraging landowners to get professional advice and initiate salvage operations appropriate to the level of damage within their forested stands. Damaged stands are prone to attract and grow southern pine beetle infestations, and contribute to the hazardous buildup of organic fuels that can significantly increase wildfire hazards.

"It's important for landowners to consult a registered forester for assistance in making decisions about impacted timberland," said Georgia Forestry Commission Director Robert Farris. "The Georgia Forestry Commission can visit tracts and provide salvage verification affidavits needed for prompt harvest and removal operations. Our goal is to make this process easier for landowners and help them get their forested stands back into full productivity."

The governor's executive order on vehicles transporting storm-damaged timber was signed on February 3, 2017 and is valid for a period of 90 days. It can be viewed here: <a href="http://bit.ly/2lhX7ub">http://bit.ly/2lhX7ub</a>. To find a registered forester in Georgia, click here: <a href="http://bit.ly/2keXJ2M">http://bit.ly/2keXJ2M</a>. For more information about salvaging timber and services of the Georgia Forestry Commission, visit <a href="GaTrees.org">GaTrees.org</a>.