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## 11,000 dead trees could cost \$706,000

By HARVEY RICE HOUSTON CHRONICLE

April 27, 2009, 9:18PM

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## TREE REMOVAL

The Federal Emergency Management Agency's estimated cost for tree removal.

- **1-6 inch trunk:** FEMA won't pay to remove
- **7-12 inch:** \$40
- **13-24 inch:** \$120
- **25-36 inch:** \$195
- **37-48 inch:** \$250
- **49 inch plus:** \$325

Source: Texas Forest Service

GALVESTON — Hurricane Ike may have killed an estimated 31,000 Galveston trees on private property and an additional 11,000 on the city right of way that will probably have to be removed for safety reasons, the Texas Forest Service said.

The Forest Service estimated the cost of removing the trees from the public right of way at \$706,000, based on Federal Emergency Management Agency estimations.

Michael Merritt, Forest Service Bayou Region urban forestry coordinator, said most of the trees are either dead or dying and will probably need to be removed.

"As they start to deteriorate and decay, they can cause some real safety problems," Merritt said.

The estimates are based on a two-day survey conducted last week by the Forest Service, the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Service and master gardener volunteers.

The team surveyed 9.5 miles of trees, recording those with 50 percent or less of canopy.

Merritt said those trees were likely dead or dying.

Although the study was not designed to estimate the number of dead private trees, surveyors also noted every dead tree visible on private property, Merritt said.

He said the number of dead trees on private property could be higher.

"Without doing a real survey on private trees, I don't want to hazard a guess as to whether it's more or less" than the estimate of 31,000, he said.

With city revenue in tatters after Ike struck on Sept. 13, Galveston asked FEMA to extend the deadline that fell at midnight Sunday for 100 percent federal payment for debris removal, Galveston Senior Project Manager Justin Bowling said.

FEMA spokesman Dan Martinez said the request is being processed and a decision is expected soon.

U.S. Sens. Kay Bailey Hutchison and John Cornyn sent a letter last week to President Barack Obama asking him to have FEMA extend the deadline for Texas.

Merritt said that removing the trees was an emotional issue for many residents who urged that the trees be given longer to recover.

"I understand that, and with some trees it might be possible to save them," he said. "But with some it's not possible, and it's a public safety issue."

Roger Johnson, city parks superintendent, said the city would try to save as many trees as possible.

"My advice is to wait as long as possible and not cut down trees," Johnson said.

He said he would cut no trees until consulting with the Forest Service.

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**ghp1947** wrote:

Remove the trees - the hardwoods should be cut up into fireplace lengths and sold for firewood to recoup the cost of taking them down. With oak fireplace logs going for a couple of hundres a fireplace cord - the price should be less than half that price to sell quickly thus reducing the shot that the taxpayers will have to absorb for the cutting. Since all insurance rates along the gulf coast have raised since IKE and the Texas state government allowed the rate hikes. What happens to all that insurance money when for 10 or 15 years there are no hurricane "Ikes" or "Allyson" storms. Do the insurance companies lower rates?????????? Not so you would notice - they have to pay their CEO's millions so that when the next natural disaster comes along they can beg the government to raise rates again.

4/28/2009 1:18:36 AM

Recommend: (70) (10)

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**manaero** wrote:

Where do I sign up for that "lucrative" contract??? \$706,000 divided by 11,000 trees is a whopping \$64.18 per tree! I LOVE government estimates! Now for my 2 cents.... I saw those trees 2 weeks ago and it was a pretty eerie sight. Mother nature does some pretty amazing things and since it has been less than a year since Ike, I think the city is being a little hasty in their rush to remove the trees. Some are clearly trying like hell to recover and they should be allowed to continue to do so. They should focus on flooding the roots with fresh water to displace the salt and some intense deep fertilization until the winter when Live Oaks typically replace their leaves. Furthermore, Live Oaks love acidic soil and the tree huggers at Starbucks offer their coffee grounds from the presses for free. How about somebody making a call to Starbucks HQ to coordinate a state-wide collection of coffee grounds for a week? Now that's thinkin' green!

4/28/2009 7:10:18 AM

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**dealwithtruth** wrote:

Since at least 70% of that populatin does not work then they have plenty of time to volunteer to clean up that poor excuse of a city.....

4/28/2009 6:08:36 AM

Recommend: (55) (64)

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**boogiem4u** wrote:

They should hire the crooked judge from Liberty county. He removed about 1000 trees but made about 4 million. Maybe the trees are bigger in Cleveland?

4/28/2009 1:06:52 AM

Recommend: (44) (7)

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**CyrilConnolly** wrote:

Merritt said that removing the trees was an emotional issue for many residents who urged that the trees be given longer to recover.

4/28/2009 12:41:11 AM

Why wait to see if they'll recover? If they do, then they'll just be weaker when the next hurricane hits and then there will be more limbs and branches and whatnot flying around. Get rid of the weak ones and keep the strong ones.

4/28/2009 12:41:11 AM

Recommend: (18) (52)

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**amidtheloser** wrote:

oh boy hurricane season is rapidly approaching.. maybe this time nature can finish the job it started last september...

4/28/2009 1:57:06 PM

Recommend: (2) (0)

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**rbmeoe** wrote:

11,000 on public land; 31,000 on private property. 42,000 trees. What you can't cut for fire wood or chop up for mulch to sell, how about putting along the beach to stop the erosion and try rebuilding the sand dunes. Don't they do that every year with the Christmas trees?

4/28/2009 12:16:26 PM

Recommend: (3) (0)

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**sargon69** wrote:

I heard someone say taht Galveston has sent some of it's "dead wood" to Cuba recently.  
4/28/2009 12:15:46 PM

Recommend: (1) (1)

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**BeauregardewasBanned** wrote:

(1)  
beefytacosalad wrote:  
dump them in the ocean, know one will ever know or see  
4/28/2009 10:51:20 AM

-----  
trees, stumps and other debris are not friends to boaters! Have you never been on a boat or in the water?

4/28/2009 11:30:03 AM

Recommend: (3) (1)

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**texbat** wrote:

That's \$9 Thousand out of \$15 Thousand that was quoted to me by TExas Windstorm, Fidelity, etc.

4/28/2009 11:29:53 AM

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