Report on eucalyptus tree limb shedding.

On Tuesday, 13 March 2012, two large eucalyptus tree limbs fell without warning in Children's Park. There are six such trees in Children's Park. It was not windy.

Fortunately, the falling limbs hit nobody. Carlos Velasco's John Deere 'gator' wasn't so fortunate. One limb hit the steel-pipe roof support structure above the passenger's door and significantly dented it. It is most fortunate this was not Carlos' head (or a child's head).

Here are Carlos, Brad, and Ken discussing the severity of the limb fall. Notice the windshield damage to the Gator. One of the hinges is broken and the windshield won't close

Our eucalyptus trees will drop (and have dropped) limbs without warning. Generally there is no prior indication that a limb is about to fail and fall. Such was the case in the present instance. Here is the broken end of one fallen 7" diameter branch:

Notice it is a clean rupture. There is no discoloration that would be associated with a crack or disease. The limb surface looks normal. Here is another view of the same limb end:

Here are the remains of the limbs after IVRPD Grounds crew cut them up and put them in a District truck:

These limb remains are by no means small. They weigh hundreds of pounds. A falling limb of this size can do considerable damage to property or people.

In the past, the Children's Park eucalyptus trees have dropped limbs without warning. For this reason, parents keep their children from visiting Children's park when it is windy.

Children and their parents need to feel safe that they can be in Children's park. The public's and our ground personnel's safety must be paramount.

We can't have trees that drop bombs without warning and can injure people or property.

Here are views of the eucalyptus tree canopy. Note the many branches going off at odd angles that might fall anytime. Note the scraggly remains of limbs that have previously fallen.

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These eucalyptus trees are cared for and pruned regularly and professionally. The pruning meets the highest standards of professional tree care. And yet, it is the nature of this species to drop limbs without warning. This species is often called a “Widow Maker”.

Wikipedia states: “River Reds and many other eucalypts have an ominous nickname, "Widow Maker", as they have a habit of dropping large boughs (often half the diameter of the trunk) without warning. This form of self-pruning may be a means of saving water or simply a result of their brittle wood.”

IVRPD needs to remove these widow maker trees and replace them with trees more suitable for the environment.

Moreover, there are many other eucalyptus trees in our parks, principally West Estero and the Camino Corto Open Space. These trees were not intentionally planted, they are exotic, are extremely invasive, and their acid leaves poison everything beneath them including the soil.

These other eucalyptus trees need to be reviewed and pruned or removed as safety dictates. Our licensed and certified arborist should be engaged for this purpose.

Our licensed and certified arborist should be instructed to be aggressive in removing hazardous trees and replacing them with trees mores suitable to the environment.

Another IV eucalyptus tree limb fall of similar dimensions:

There was another eucalyptus tree limb fall of similar dimensions on 21 May 2011 in the small park at the end of the Del Playa Open Space that is in line with Camino Majorca.

The eucalyptus tree from which the limb fell is on University owned property that is adjacent to this park.

Pictures follow

Same problems in other cities and lawsuits:

The California cities of Corona del Mar, Newport Beach, Palo Alto, Larkspur have experienced similar dangerous eucalyptus limb falls. See Appendices A, B, C, and D.

Newport Beach for has been sued for wrongful death by the parents of a woman killed when a eucalyptus branch fell on her car.

The City of Corona del Mar is removing 33 eucalyptus trees as a result of limb falls that have endangered the public.

Larkspur is removing 27 eucalyptus trees because of both danger and fire hazard.

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Suggested motion:

The General Manager is to contract with our licensed and certified arborist to remove the eucalyptus trees in Children's Park and replace them with trees more suitable to the environment.

Moreover, the contract with the licensed and certified arborist is also to review eucalyptus trees in other IVRPD parks and remove or aggressively prune them as required to ensure maximum public and staff safety.

Children's park is to be closed until the tree danger is abated.

The GM will take all steps necessary to implement Children's Park closure forthwith.

APPENDIX A
CORONA DEL MAR

City Will Remove 33 Blue Gums, Officials Say at CdM Town Meeting

posted: October 14th, 2011 09:29 am

Crews will begin removing 33 Blue Gum Eucalyptus trees, probably starting Monday, along Fourth Avenue in Corona del Mar, a city official told about 50 people who attended a town hall meeting Thursday at the OASIS Senior Center.

"I know this is hard," said Mark Harmon, Newport Beach municipal operations director. "This is a public safety issue."

Of the trees, 31 pose high to extreme risk of falling and two pose moderate risk, he said.

City arborists and an outside expert inspected Corona del Mar's blue gums following a Sept. 15 accident when a blue gum on Irvine Avenue fell and killed 29-year-old Haeyoon Miller. After that accident, crews removed 100 trees from the Irvine Avenue median and began inspecting all blue gums in the city, mostly in Corona del Mar, along Holiday Road and along the Castaways

Park bike path. The inspections considered the size, health, site condition and whether the trees were in populated or heavily used areas, Harmon said.

One Corona del Mar tree that failed inspection and was suggested for immediate removal fell a day later on Fourth and Goldenrod avenues during an Oct. 5 rainstorm. That tree damaged two homes and four cars and another blue gum across the street. Crews removed the damaged tree and four others immediately; read our stories here and here.

Tree removal will take about a week, with crews working first to remove 22 trees on the north side of East Coast Highway and then moving to remove 11 trees on the south side. The trees are 50 to 60 feet tall and weigh 6 to 8 tons each, Harmon said.

One resident said she loved her three eucalyptus trees, which she named Huey, Dewey, and Louie.

"They took Huey and Dewey," said Mary Porter. "Now Louie's in trouble. Don't you think they could be shortened or something?"

Harmon said no.

"Topping them kills eucalyptus," he said.

Other residents questioned the city's tree-trimming schedule and complained about Marguerite Avenue's palms, which drop heavy, sharp fronds. Others asked about where birds would go when the trees were removed, and if the city wasn't making a "rush to judgment." Some questioned how the city's arborists couldn't have seen the danger that the blue gums posed in their earlier, regular inspections.

Harmon said city officials would pre-determine about three trees that would be good replacements and let residents where a blue gum was removed make the choice. The city also would pay for irrigation system repairs and fresh sod, he said.

But a few residents questioned the reforestation plan.

"I understand the trees have to go, I understand why," said Todd Kuh. "Fourth Street has a very strong identity with these trees. I would like to at least have the city consider the possibility of block-by-block consistency."

Resident Joe Garrett said, "I love the trees, I love Corona del Mar, I love the fact that it's an urban forest, a tree community. We'll lose our identity as a city."

Harmon said there was no way to save the blue gums.

"I understand that they define your neighborhood, I get it," he said. "But these trees are a safety issue and need to be removed."

APPENDIX B
NEWPORT BEACH

Family Members File Claims Against City in Eucalyptus Tree Fatality

posted: March 16th, 2012 05:37 pm | 0No Comments

The parents of a woman killed by a Blue Gum Eucalyptus tree that fell on her car last fall have filed separate wrongful death claims against Newport Beach.

City officials today emailed copies of the claims filed by the parents of Haeyoon Miller, 29, who was killed Sept. 15 when the 10-ton tree fell on her car on Irvine Avenue.

Miller's mother, Hyun Myung Suk of Littlerock, Calif., is seeking more than $10,000, according to the claim filed on March 6. The claim seeks damages "for the loss of care, comfort, society, solace, support, and companionship," as well as for out-of-pocket expenses for Miller's funeral.

Her claims alleges that the fallen tree was a "hidden trap" to motorists, was overgrown and leaning toward traffic, was rotten and decayed, and that Newport Beach negligently "planted, constructed, maintained, inspected, and controlled the Subject Tree where this incident occurred in a dangerous and unsafe condition."

"In fact, the city was aware of several other incidents (some in close proximity to the incident location) where similar trees fell over and caused damage to persons and/or property," the claim states.

The claim also alleges that the city's quick removal of the tree and others nearby was an effort to conceal and destroy evidence.

At the time, city officials called for inspections of Blue Gum eucalyptus trees throughout the city, and more than 100 were removed along Irvine Avenue and dozens more in Corona del Mar because they were deemed unsafe; read our stories here and here.

The second claim was filed Wednesday by lawyers representing Miller's father, Kang Nam-Ku of Seoul, Korea.

That claim did not specify the amount of damages sought but said they included damage to Miller's car, funeral expenses, "loss of financial support, services, and the loss of Ms. Miller's love, companionship, comfort, care, assistance, protection, affection, society, moral support, training and guidance." The claim also seeks punitive damages "as may be allowed by law."

His claim alleges that Newport Beach as well as Costa Mea "negligently minted this tree, failed to conduct reasonable inspections, failed to remove a dangerous and diseased tree and failed to warn the public and the decedent, Ms. Miller, of the dangerous subject tree…Both cities created the danger condition and also knew or should have known of this dangerous condition in a sufficient timer o have remedies the dangerous condition."

His claim also alleges that city employees were "grossly negligent in their actions following the tree incident…by failing to stabilize the fallen tree so as to prevent its further dangerous movement."

The further sudden movement of the tree caused or contributed to Miller's death, the claim states. Some witnesses said that emergency workers trying to remove the tree that trapped Miller dropped it back on the car, but others denied that account.

Newport Beach city officials reached by email on Friday decline to comment on the claims.

APPENDIX C
PALO ALTO

Palo Alto online

'Widow maker' tree limb nearly hits Crescent Park resident

Neighbors concerned about eucalyptus trees near Pardee Park playground

by Sue Dremann
Palo Alto Online Staff

A large tree limb from an aged eucalyptus tree nearly struck a Crescent Park resident and has sparked a debate about the safety of the aged trees at Eleanor Pardee Park.

Ron Eadie was taking one of his seven daily walks around the neighborhood park at Channing Avenue and Center Drive when a large limb crashed down on the sidewalk, missing him by inches, he said.

"I heard a loud crack. It sounded like a rifle shot. I ducked. Two limbs pancaked down on the sidewalk on Channing just 20 paces from where I was standing. The heavy butt ends of the branches were 5 1/2 to 6 inches in diameter. They thudded right where my head would be. You know what they call those trees, don't you? 'Widow makers,'" he said.

The Jan. 18 incident has neighbors concerned whether the 50- to 100-year-old trees should be removed. The 16 trees, which city officials say are 120 to 150 feet tall, surround a children's play structure area and canopy two sidewalks around the park's perimeter.

Worried residents and mothers of small children have taken up the issue with City of Palo Alto staff.

Longtime residents said the trees have been part of the landscape since Eleanor Pardee lived in a ramshackle house on the property in the early 1950s, well before it became a park.

But some residents said it's time to reconsider if the trees are safe, given their height and the area's high density of foot traffic.

Amy Kacher, a mother whose three young children play at the park, said a 36-foot limb fell on the path to the entry gate to the playground on the Channing side on Friday morning. She could not budge the limb, she said.

"We're not trying to be over-dramatic. They're beautiful. But having them there is not logical," she said.

Steve Bisset, who was born and raised in Australia, said on the neighborhood e-mail that he was camping under a eucalyptus tree in Australia in 1965 when another eucalyptus fell over "with a deafening crash about 20 feet away, under windless conditions. More recently I was on the Stanford campus when a giant eucalyptus branch crashed to the ground nearby, again in windless conditions."

Reached by phone, he said he didn't necessarily want the trees removed.

"The Pardee Park eucalyptus are among the most beautiful of trees," he said.

But the danger to life is real, he said.

"Many arborists in Australia are experts in identifying which branches are dangerous. I would hope someone who has expert knowledge that is specific with eucalypts could identify and remove the branches that are in danger of falling. It would be better to keep the trees than not," he said.

But if that can't be done with certainty, the trees should be chopped down, since the area is a park where children play, he said.

City officials met with residents at the park on Wednesday, Feb. 24, and another meeting will be scheduled soon, according to Eric Krebs, city arborist.

Krebs said as many as six trees are being considered for removal. He has been watching the trees for sulfur fungus, a disease that causes rot in certain trees.

Pardee Park has two species of eucalyptus -- Eucalyptus globulus or blue gum and Eucalyptus viminalis or white gum, he said. The trees are native to Australia.

"Eucalyptus has very heavy wood and has very strong wood. Without defects, it's a pretty strong tree. They get a bad name because they do drop limbs," he said.

The label "widow maker" is a bit unfair to the eucalyptus, Krebs said. Quite a few other tree species also habitually drop large limbs, he said, especially during "summer limb drop," when trees try to reduce water loss from the trunk during drier periods. The drops occur mostly in windless or light-wind conditions between noon and 4 p.m., according to arborists' reports.

Liquid ambar, oak, sycamore, silver maple, poplar and others drop horizontal limbs up to four inches in diameter, according to the California Tree Failure Report.

"I never say a tree is 'safe.' There's no such thing. To have no hazard with trees is to have no trees," he said.

On average, arborists inspect each tree on city property every seven years, he said. He has regularly watched the Pardee Park trees because of the sulfur fungus and the city will properly trim all branches deemed a hazard, he said.

In 15 years, Eadie said he has never encountered such a massive limb fall. He has occasionally jumped over 2-inch branches that have dropped onto the sidewalk, but his Martin Luther King Day encounter has left him shaken. He won't walk under the trees anymore, he said.

His wife, Pat Eadie, said she often worries about his walks.

"I worry about him with his iPod. I say, 'You're just a sitting duck for somebody to mug you.' But I was not thinking it would be a tree limb."

Find this article at:
http://www.paloaltoonline.com/news/show_story.php?story_id=15915

Appendix D

Larkspur eucalyptus trees that were subject of lawsuit coming down

Jessica Bernstein-Wax
Posted: 10/06/2010 05:55:21 PM PDT
Updated: 10/07/2010 09:50:10 AM PDT

Tree cutters bring down large eucalyptus trees beside a house at 60 Bayview Ave. in Larkspur on Wednesday. Neighbors were concerned that the trees could fall or be a fire hazard. (IJ photo/Frankie Frost)

A tree-cutting crew has begun removing 27 massive eucalyptus trees a judge ordered a Larkspur woman to take down last year.

In June the California Supreme Court said it wouldn't hear property owner Anne Wolff's appeal of the 2009 Marin Superior Court ruling ordering removal of 28 of her 45 blue gum eucalyptus trees at 64 Bayview Ave. That ruling was upheld by the state 1st District Court of Appeal in April.

Wolff, who said she loved the trees for their environmental benefits and ability to provide shade and privacy, contemplated further legal action but ultimately decided to comply with the ruling. The decision ended a 14-year neighborhood dispute over the towering trees.

"Environmentally, eucalyptus trees sequester more carbon dioxide than any other

Anne Wolff lost a long legal battle to neighbors in Larkspur who wanted some of the eucalyptus trees removed. (IJ photo/Frankie Frost)

tree but one," Wolff said. "The fact that I couldn't save my trees here is really a tragedy. The neighbors did not like to rake up the leaves, and they did not like the noise the trees made."

But Barri K. Bonapart, the attorney representing neighbors Michael and Joni Mindel and Catherine and Lawrence Way, said her clients became increasingly worried about the trees over the years after heavy limbs fell on their property and three trees fell down.

There was also concern that they posed a fire hazard, she said. Bonapart called the eucalyptus removal "long overdue."

"The judgment in this action was issued in May last year," Bonapart said. "It's taken this long and the threat of her doing jail time for her to finally act on the court order."

On Aug. 27, Larkspur issued a permit granting the Small World Tree Co. of San Anselmo permission to remove 25 of the trees, said Tauny Kasuya, a customer service representative for the city. A second permit was issued on Sept. 29 for removal of two more trees.

Wolff said she is waiting to remove the final tree, which is closest to the street, because it may be on city land. She declined to say how much she had spent in legal fees and for the tree removal.

Anne Wolff of Larkspur placed protest signs in her yard. (IJ photo/Frankie Frost)

The process of taking out the trees, some of which are reputed to be more than 100 years old, began Saturday and could take about three weeks, said Jim Cairnes, co-owner of Small World Tree Co.

Cairnes and his workers had removed branches from 11 trees Wednesday and planned to bring in a crane to pull up trunks later this month. Some of the trees are about 130 feet tall with branches weighing 5,000 pounds, he said.

Wolff said eucalyptus trees have an undeserved bad reputation in part because they're not native to California. She added that taller trees pose less of a fire hazard because their leaves are high up.

Kent Julin, a forester for the Marin County Fire Department, said eucalyptus are "notorious for catching on fire and blowing downwind."

However, "even a eucalyptus tree if it's well maintained and separated from other ignition sources, it can be pretty fire safe," Julin said. Keeping the surrounding ground clear of leaves and bark also helps prevent fires, he said.

During the trial, the plaintiffs contended Wolff's trees weren't properly maintained.

Even though the trees are coming down, Wolff had signs outside her home Wednesday criticizing her neighbors for "destroying private property" and natural resources. She also will hold a memorial for the trees on Oct. 23, during which a professional wood carver will make an inscription in one of the fallen eucalyptus' trunks.

She plans to put the carved trunk in front of her house.

"People do have a private property right, but it doesn't extend to the potential harm to others," neighbor Catherine Way said. "It's not a forest. It's a home in a neighborhood."

Way added that while she's relieved the trees will be gone soon, she remains disappointed that efforts to resolve the matter outside of court failed.

"I would encourage everyone who has these disputes with their neighbors to try to work them out without involving the law," Way said. "The law is extremely adversarial, and it's very expensive."