



Christmas Tree Cutting Frequently Asked Questions

Q: I live in the Denver Metro Area, where can I go to cut a Christmas tree in a national forest?

A: There are several areas along the Front Range that provide Christmas tree cutting for the general public. For this specific program under [Recreation Enhancement Act](#) authority, the primary cutting areas are: The [Buffalo Creek](#) area on the South Platte Ranger District; the [Rampart Range Road](#) area on the Pikes Peak Ranger District; the [Fraser](#) area near Winter Park on the Sulphur Ranger District and the [Red Feather Lakes](#) area north of Ft. Collins on the Canyon Lakes Ranger District.

Q: Why are there core cutting dates for these areas and when are they?

A: Based on public feedback, core cutting dates were established so that there would be at least some dates consistent among all districts participating in the program and for the media. Some districts use only the core dates while others extend their program beyond those dates. The core cutting dates for this year are December 3-11, 2011.

Q: Why are there set hours for cutting a Christmas tree and what are they?

A: The hours for cutting a tree are set for your safety. Days are short in December and it may take a while to find that perfect tree. If you enter a tree cutting area late in the afternoon chances are you may be cutting your tree and then finding your vehicle in the dark. The hours are 8:30 am to 2:30pm.

Q: Do I need a permit? If so, how much do they cost?

A: Yes. A tree cutting permit is *required* before cutting a Christmas tree. The permits are \$10.00 and available at all participating ranger district offices. Other locations and methods for obtaining permits for particular areas are specified on each district's Web site. There is a limit of 5 permits per person unless otherwise specified. The permit must be attached to the top of the tree for easy visibility when removing it from the cutting site.

Q: Can I cut any size tree I want?

A: No. To keep within the thinning process, please cut a tree with trunk size 6" in diameter or less and cut as close to the ground as you can get. Take the whole tree. You can always use any extra boughs for decorations or other purposes.

Q: Are any of these areas open Thanksgiving weekend?

A: Yes. The area near [Fairplay](#) will be open Thanksgiving weekend but a permit *must* be purchased ahead of time as the office will be closed that weekend. The [Buffalo Creek](#) area will be open Nov. 26 and 27 and permits must also be purchased in advance specifying one of those dates. Check www.fs.usda.gov/goto/psicc/sopl/xmas or call 303-275-5610 for more information.





Q: What are the most important things to bring to cut a Christmas tree?

A: A **handsaw** – (*chainsaws are strictly prohibited and axes are messy*)

- **Map** for getting to and from site
- **Dress in layers** and be prepared for winter weather
- **Boots** with warm socks (could be snow in some areas)
- Full tank of **gas**
- Set of **tire chains** (that fit your tires)
- Food, extra water, warm drinks, a shovel, a blanket, and a first-aid kit
- A **rope and tarp** to pack your tree in for the trip home
- A **flashlight** if you plan on cutting a tree in the early afternoon

Q: What tree cutting sites require tire chains or a 4-wheel drive vehicle to access the area?

A: Chains or a high clearance 4-wheel drive vehicle are required at the [Fraser](#) and [Red Feather Lakes](#) areas and highly recommended at the [Rampart Range Road](#) area to enter the tree cutting sites. There will be a checkpoint for sufficient traction devices before entering the [Fraser](#) area only during the core dates. All others strongly recommend taking chains or a 4-wheel drive just in case. Be prepared for emergencies.

Q: Do I need to select a date to cut a tree at all tree cutting sites?

A: Only for the [Buffalo Creek](#) area on the South Platte Ranger District. Due to its proximity to Denver and location in lower elevations, the [Buffalo Creek](#) area is the most popular. Only 7,000 permits are sold for this site and due to heavy impacts on the weekends where the entrance/exit site is narrow and parking is limited, district employees need to spread out the impacts to the area over the cutting days to ensure a quality experience and safety for all involved.

Q: Can I bring my pet?

A: Yes, however, it is probably best for all involved (including your pet) to leave pets at home. But if bringing Spike is part of your Christmas tree cutting experience, he must be on a leash at all times. For many reasons-including getting lost or hurt or bothering other tree cutters or wildlife-pets are not allowed to run free in the Christmas tree cutting area. Thank you for your cooperation and understanding.

Q: Where does the \$10.00 permit fee go?

A: The first \$2.00 goes directly to the United States Treasury under special forest products authority. 95% of the remaining \$8.00 goes directly back to the site where it was collected to maintain the Christmas tree cutting program. The remaining 5% goes to a regional fund to support the Christmas tree cutting program on a regional level as grants or loans under the [Recreation Enhancement Act](#) fee program.

Q: Have wildfires affected the Christmas tree cutting areas?

A: Yes, although it has been a while, only in the Pike National Forest with the Pikes Peak Ranger District being the hardest hit. About 80% of their old tree cutting area north of Divide was burned over by the Hayman Fire. This will be the seventh year at the [Rampart Range Road](#) location.

