

## Trees Are a Threat

The mountain town of Canton is at an elevation of 6,000 feet. It is surrounded by thick underbrush and pine trees. Because of six years of drought, these plants are a major fire hazard. Thousands of trees and tons of underbrush are going to be removed over the next five years at a minimum cost of \$3 million. The brush will be removed first, then the trees will be toppled and removed. A cleared nonflammable area will then safely surround the town of 4,000.

Residents look forward to the work, because it will help their town survive a future inferno. "But there are two problems," said one resident. "All the extra trucks are going to make traffic pretty bad. Once the area is cleared, we have to make sure dirt bikers don't try to make the cleared area their personal playground."

A recent fire burned 4,000 acres and destroyed 11 homes in nearby Hamilton. The fire was raging toward Canton, but a sudden rainstorm put it out. Residents know that they won't get lucky twice, so they are looking forward to this massive clearing operation.

Ninety percent of the cutting and clearing will be paid with federal funds. Unfortunately, if the trees are on private property, they must be paid for by the residents themselves. Prices can range as high as \$1,000 to cut and remove one tree. Officials say that residents can apply for state and federal loans if necessary.

"Well, what good does that do me?" asked Thelma, a 65-year-old widow. "I'm living on social security. I've got four trees on my property. The government's not going to loan me money when they know there's no way I can pay it back. So what am I supposed to do? These planners with all their big ideas ought to think of the little people."

