

Bay Area Government So Incapable Of Helping It's Homeless That Citizens Are Forced To Live In Makeshift Tree Houses

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FREMONT (CBS SF) — The occupants of five to six ramshackle tree houses built in a private industrial park near Stevenson Boulevard and I-880 in Fremont are facing eviction.



Crews equipped with chainsaws and handsaws have begun clearing out the structures and cutting off limbs in order to make it harder to reoccupy and easier to spot the homeless who are taking refuge in the trees. They are about halfway through the long line of more than 60 eucalyptus trees.

Neighboring business owners say the first tree house went up in February and started multiplying over the next three months.

The structures vary in size, complexity and height above the ground. One is at ground level, while another is more than 30 feet up, accessible only by a ladder with sparsely-placed rungs. Each treehouse displays a fair amount of carpentry know-how, utilizing joists to support the floor below and straps to support the structure from above. It also appears the builders have access to power tools.

Marc, who identified himself as a transient but declined to give his last name, said he has been storing his belongings in one of the tree houses for about a month.

Despite being attacked and bitten by rodents and other insects that infest the tree and inhaling fumes from a nearby wood roofing factory, he prefers the trees over the street.

"I think it's a good idea actually, I think it's actually something that people would benefit from if we had the right knowledge of trees," said Marc.

While the new residents are comfortable with this roof over their heads some neighbors are not so happy. A woman named Jane who didn't want to be identified said she works

next door to one of the tree houses. She said several of the company cars have been broken into recently and she worries about her safety.

“There’s a lot of us women who work here late ... so I’m worried that I could be in danger,” she said.

Fremont police say they responded to at least one call recently at the site. The resulting action taken after that visit was not immediately clear.

KPIX 5's Andrea Nakano contributed to this report