

# Somerset County Emergency Operations Plan

## ATTACHMENT K - BLIGHT AND INFESTATION

### I. NATURE OF THE HAZARD

Blight and Infestation is described as any injury to plants resulting in withering, cessation of growth and death of the above ground part of the plants including flowers and stems caused by: disease organisms (fungi, bacteria or virus), insects, or unfavorable environmental conditions.

Secondary Effects from blight and infestation may be vegetation that has been seriously affected by plant pests or unfavorable growing conditions becomes more susceptible to fires ignited by man or lightening. As root systems die, topsoil becomes more vulnerable to erosion, thus valuable farm and forest land may be impacted or re-vegetation restricted because of inadequate nutrients in soils.

### II. RISK AREAS

The State of Maine has 17.7 million acres of forested land and 1.25 million acres of farmland which are susceptible to plant pest infestations and environmental damage. Historically, there have been instances where large areas have been impacted by plant pests and environmental problems, including: spruce budworm, Dutch elm disease, white pine blister rust, brown-tail moth, potato late blight, gypsy moth and severe drought. Spruce budworm once infested 200,000 acres of forest. Brown-tail moth and gypsy moth infestations seem to be spreading across the state.

Somerset County's forestland, orchards, and croplands are very important to the economic well being of the County and could be seriously impacted by blight and infestation.

### III. DIRECTION AND CONTROL

Due to the environmental scope of a blight and infestation, such an event will not be directed and controlled by the County or municipal officials.

Local farmers, foresters, loggers and State forest rangers will be the "emergency responders" for blight and infestation in the Maine woods or farms. The lead State Agencies will be the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Conservation. Guidance and direction as to what may be accomplished by Somerset County will be directed from these two State agencies and the State EOC.

State government and the general public have responded to these problems. Regulations have been promulgated providing protection from exposure by restricting the importation of certain materials that may be carriers. Spray programs have been undertaken in the past to combat problems.

### VII. RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The Maine Department of Agriculture conducts inspections of businesses selling plants and has a certification program for seed potatoes to ensure disease free seed potatoes are planted. Researchers at the University of Maine conduct research to develop plants resistant to various pests and also evaluate a number of methods to control plant pests. The Maine State Forest Service is responsible for protecting the forest from the effects of infestation.