

# Spring projects feel lumber pinch

(AP) — It'll cost more to put that deck on the house this spring than it did last fall — about 60 percent more, lumber retailers say.

Lumber prices that had been on the rise about a year ago shot up about 60 percent just since November.

"I've seen it get totally and utterly stupid — out of control," said Dave Hunt, owner of B&D Lumber Co. Inc.

Some blame it on trade practices, some on Hurricane Andrew and others on the spotted owl controversy.

"You get a million excuses from anybody," said Bill Harmon with Town & Country Homecenter. "It started with the hurricane... now it's too wet to get in to cut logs."

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stressed by the weather and by wholesalers who usually buy lumber from the West but have seen their own supplies drying up thanks to logging cutbacks.

Trade publications estimate 133,000 logging jobs have been lost in the Pacific Northwest because of policies to protect the spotted owl. On Friday, the U.S. Forest Service asked for even more logging cutbacks to protect other endangered species.

Whatever the reason, the increases aren't just affecting the cost of 2-by-4's. The price of other building products such as moldings, doors and windows also are skyrocketing. And lumber retailers and wholesalers aren't the only ones feeling the pinch.

"I am in the middle of a big project right now," said Dave Swank, owner of Cherokee Build-

ers Inc. "I bid it in September and started it in January, and it's costing me a small fortune in the difference between what I bid for the job and what the cost is now."

The result has been a decline in business for builders. And that affects the peripheral contractors: heating, plumbing and electrical contractors, as well as floor-covering and furniture retailers.

"If I've lost a job, they have too," Blunt said.

Swank said there are some things contractors can do.

"We have to get smarter and get more efficient. And probably a big chunk of us will go out of business," he said.

"What really scares me, though, is how will my kids and your kids ever be able to afford a house?" Swank said.



Endangered species? As the outdoor building season gets into full swing, the price of lumber may surprise homeowners thinking of adding a deck to their yards. And the increases aren't just affecting the cost of 2-by-4's. The price of other building products such as moldings, doors and windows also is skyrocketing.

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