



Public Review and Comment Fire Hazard Severity Zones in Local Responsibility Areas

Fire Department

City Council
April 8, 2025



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LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

Legislative Origins and Initial Implementation

- **Assembly Bill (AB) 337 – The "Bates Bill" (1992)**
 - Enacted after the 1991 Oakland Hills Fire
 - Required OSFM to identify Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones (VHFHSZ) in Local Responsibility Areas (LRAs)
 - Mandated recommendations to local governments for formal adoption
- **2008-2011 CAL FIRE Collaboration**
 - Worked with local jurisdictions to designate VHFHSZ within LRAs
 - Required local governments to adopt these designations by ordinance
 - Allowed local agencies to implement more restrictive fire safety measures



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LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

Recent Legislative Developments & Expanded FHSZ Designations

- **Senate Bill (SB) 63 (2021)**
 - Expanded FHSZ classifications to include:
 - Moderate
 - High
 - Very High
 - Marked a shift toward a comprehensive wildfire hazard evaluation
- **Assembly Bill (AB) 211 (2022)**
 - Mandated local governments to adopt all three classifications by ordinance within 120 days of OSFM recommendations



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BACKGROUND

Background: History of Fire Hazard Severity Zones in the Local Responsibility Area (LRA)

- **Evolution of Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZ) in California**
 - Developed in response to increasing wildfire threats
 - Managed by the Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) in collaboration with local jurisdictions
 - Uses systematic approach based on wildfire hazard potential
- **Factors Determining FHSZ Designations**
 - Likelihood of fire occurrence and expected behavior over a 30- to 50-year period
 - Key considerations:
 - Fuel loading
 - Terrain
 - Fire weather conditions
 - Historical fire activity
 - Wind patterns



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BACKGROUND

Background: History of Fire Hazard Severity Zones in the Local Responsibility Area (LRA)

- **Previous FHSZ Maps**

- Developed by CALFIRE to identify high-risk wildfire areas.
- First implemented in 2007 in SRA and later adopted for LRA.
- Required updates due to climate change, drought, and WUI development.

- **Updated FHSZ Maps and Local Implication**

- Released in phases across California.
- City of Riverside maps published on March 24, 2025.



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DISCUSSION

Updated Fire Hazard Severity Zone (FHSZ) Maps

- Integrate new scientific models, climate data, and wildfire assessments for improved accuracy.
- Essential for urban areas near wildlands, addressing ember transport and vegetation density.

Key Implications for Local Governments:

- Building Codes: WUI standards apply to new construction in High & Very High FHSZs.
- Defensible Space: 100 feet of clearance required around structures.
- Land Use & Planning: FHSZ designations must be incorporated into general plans, zoning, and emergency response.
- Real Estate Disclosures: Property owners must disclose wildfire hazards during transactions.



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DISCUSSION

- Updated FHSZ maps were released on March 24, 2025.
- Government Code Section 51178 requires local agencies to make information available for public review and comment within 30 days of receipt.
- Maps have been posted on the City's website with a comment portal.
 - Properties are searchable by address and parcel number
- City's website has detailed information on history of FHSZ maps and science behind Cal Fire's implementation.



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DISCUSSION

Screen Shot of Website for Public Access and Review



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STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT

This item contributes to Strategic Priority Number 2: Community Well-Being and Goal 2.6 – Strengthen community preparedness for emergencies to ensure effective response and recovery.

Cross-Cutting Threads



Community Trust



Fiscal Responsibility



Sustainability & Resiliency



Equity



Innovation



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RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Council:

1. Receive and review the updated FHSZ maps released by the Office of the State Fire Marshall (OSFM) on 3/24/2025; and
2. Make the maps publicly available; and
3. Solicit public comment



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