

BOARD OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION

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To: Resource Protection Committee
Chair Bruce Saito
Member Keith Gillless
Member Sue Husari

Date: April 2, 2015

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From: Edith Hannigan, Board Consultant

Subject: Safety Element Assessment Evaluation Criteria

Dear Chair Saito, Member Gillless, and Member Husari,

The Safety Element Assessment is used by Board staff and staff of the CAL FIRE Land Use Planning Program (LUPP) to evaluate General Plan Safety Elements submitted to the Board for approval. The Safety Element Assessment has three versions, assigned to a jurisdiction based on the amount of Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones (VHFHSZ), State Responsibility Area (SRA), existing financial and physical resources in the community, and previous wildfire protection planning efforts. Version 1 assumes high fire hazard/SRA, extensive firefighting resources, and multiple successful previous wildfire planning efforts (Los Angeles County, San Luis Obispo County) whereas Version 3 assumes little to no fire hazard/SRA, limited firefighting resources, and little to no previous wildfire protection planning (recently incorporated communities, low population centers, etc). Version 2 is a “middle ground” between them.

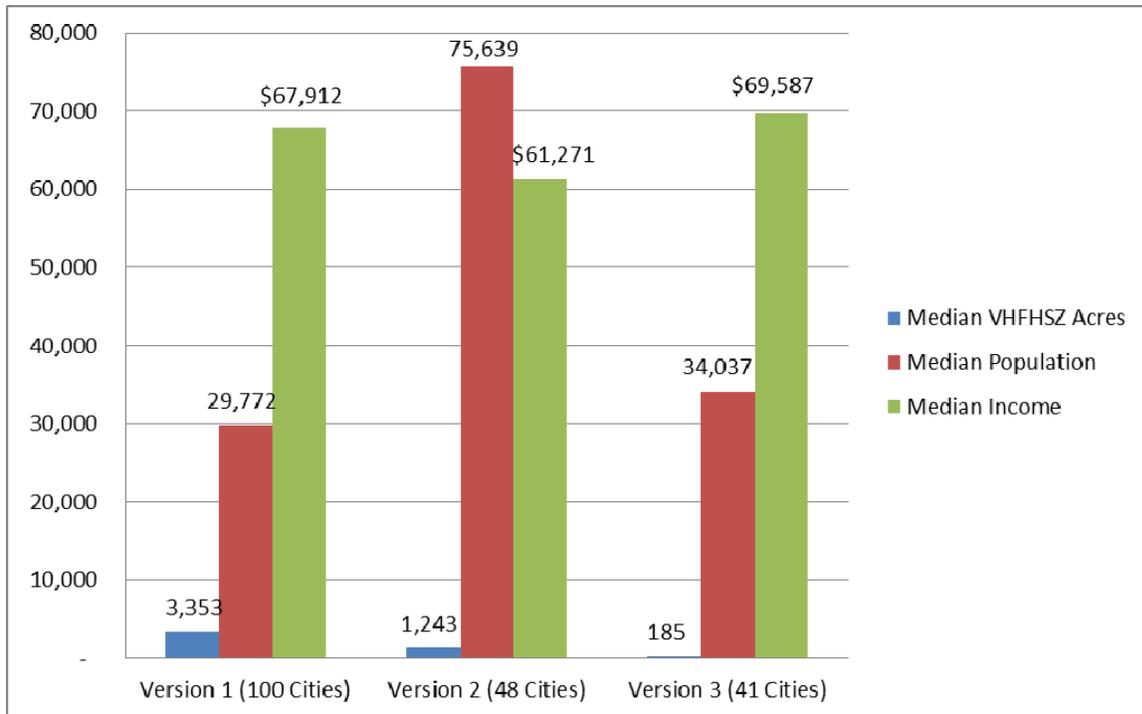
LUPP staff requested the Board supply criteria to allow for clearer communication with local governments when providing them with an Assessment to use as a guide for their safety element update. Considering the Safety Element Assessment is utilized to evaluate 56 counties and 200 local jurisdictions, Board staff came up with two approaches for assigning Safety Element Assessment Versions to counties versus cities.

All counties, except those listed below, are assigned Safety Element Assessment Version 1. Counties assigned Safety Element Assessment Version 1 have

- Overall high population densities
- High proportion of SRA or VHFHSZ LRA
- Population centers in or adjacent to VHFHSZ SRA, if there is no designated VHFHSZ LRA in the county
- Within the context of neighboring counties, the location of VHFHSZ in the county creates an overall picture of contiguous fuels that threaten population or economic centers

The counties assigned Safety Element Assessment Version 2 are Colusa, Imperial, Inyo, Kings, Merced, Modoc, and Mono. These counties have small amounts of SRA and/or Fire Hazard Severity Zones, population centers in Moderate or no FHSZ, and do not add significantly to contiguous high fire hazard fuels at the region level.

Using similar guidelines, Board staff have developed preliminary assessment assignments for the 189 cities with LRA VHFHSZ. 100 cities have been assigned Version 1, 48 cities Version 2, and 41 cities Version 3.



Any city with 20% or more VHFHSZ was assigned Version 1, 10 to 20% Version 2, and less than 10% Version 3. There are some cities with less than 10% VHFHSZ that were assigned Version 2 because the larger landscape context around the VHFHSZ created an overall greater hazard. Below is listed, per county, the number of incorporated cities assigned each Assessment Version and the average VHFHSZ in each LRA by county:

County	Version 1	Version 2	Version 3	Total LRA w/ VHFHSZ	Average LRA VHFHSZ
Alameda	1	3	1	5	2,725
Amador			1	1	180
Butte	1		1	2	5,448
Calaveras		1		1	428
Contra Costa	4		4	8	1,714
El Dorado	2			2	4,448
Lake	1			1	1,584
Lassen			1	1	419
Los Angeles	31	2	6	39	5,950

Marin	1	1	1	3	1,106
Mendocino		1	1	2	202
Mono			1	1	296
Monterey	1	1	2	4	366
Napa	1		1	2	188
Nevada	3			3	4,580
Orange	10	5	5	20	2,817
Placer	1		1	2	615
Plumas	1			1	2,113
Riverside	5	11	6	22	3,494
San Bernardino	9	6		15	3,699
San Diego	6	6	1	13	11,915
San Luis Obispo	2	1	1	4	1,899
San Mateo	5		3	8	1,041
Santa Barbara	1		1	2	1,829
Santa Clara	3	2	1	6	1,970
Shasta	2	1		3	7,014
Siskiyou	4	2		6	758
Sonoma		1	1	2	860
Tehama		1		1	523
Tuolumne	1			1	1,553
Ventura	4	3	1	8	6,549
Total	100	48	41	189	

However, as local fuels, boundaries, populations, and other variables change throughout time, LUPP staff have the discretion to re-assign a city with LRA VHFHSZ into a lower or higher assessment version. LUPP staff are asked to consider:

- Variations in population and population density
- Changes in proportion of land designated VHFHSZ (lower or higher)
- Firefighting capabilities (paid, volunteer, equipment, etc) and contract changes
- Past planning efforts and involvement of organizations such as local Fire Safe Councils and new initiatives or efforts that have emerged over time
- Changes to the context of VHFHSZ within the region – does the VHFHSZ in a jurisdiction combine with neighboring fuels to create a continual pattern of very high fire risk in a way that it hadn't previously?

Board staff is asking RPC at this time for additional considerations and input to incorporate into a rewrite of the introduction to each assessment (attached) and a possible checklist for LUPP staff when considering changing the level of assessment used for evaluation.

Thank you.