

Purpose and Background

Upon the next revision of the housing element on or after January 1, 2014, the safety element is required to be reviewed and updated as necessary to address the risk of fire for land classified as state responsibility areas and land classified as very high fire hazard severity zones. (Gov. Code, § 65302, subd. (g)(3).)

The safety element is required to include:

- Fire hazard severity zone maps available from the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.
- Any historical data on wildfires available from local agencies or a reference to where the data can be found.
- Information about wildfire hazard areas that may be available from the United States Geological Survey.
- The general location and distribution of existing and planned uses of land in very high fire hazard severity zones (VHFHSZs) and in state responsibility areas (SRAs), including structures, roads, utilities, and essential public facilities. The location and distribution of planned uses of land shall not require defensible space compliance measures required by state law or local ordinance to occur on publicly owned lands or open space designations of homeowner associations.
- The local, state, and federal agencies with responsibility for fire protection, including special districts and local offices of emergency services. (Gov. Code, § 65302, subd. (g)(3)(A).)

Based on that information, the safety element shall include goals, policies, and objectives that protect the community from the unreasonable risk of wildfire. (Gov. Code, § 65302, subd. (g)(3)(B).) To carry out those goals, policies, and objectives, feasible implementation measures shall be included in the safety element, which include but are not limited to:

- Avoiding or minimizing the wildfire hazards associated with new uses of land.
- Locating, when feasible, new essential public facilities outside of high fire risk areas, including, but not limited to, hospitals and health care facilities, emergency shelters, emergency command centers, and emergency communications facilities, or identifying construction methods or other methods to minimize damage if these facilities are located in the SRA or VHFHSZ.
- Designing adequate infrastructure if a new development is located in the SRA or VHFHSZ, including safe access for emergency response vehicles, visible street signs, and water supplies for structural fire suppression.
- Working cooperatively with public agencies with responsibility for fire protection. (Gov. Code, § 65302, subd. (g)(3)(C).)

The safety element shall also attach or reference any fire safety plans or other documents adopted by the city or county that fulfill the goals and objectives or contains the information required above. (Gov. Code, § 65302, subd. (g)(3)(D).) This might include Local Hazard Mitigation Plans, Unit Fire Plans, Community Wildfire Protection Plans, or other plans.

There are several reference documents developed by state agencies to assist local jurisdictions in updating their safety elements to include wildfire safety. The Fire Hazard Planning, General Plan Technical Advice Series from the Governor's Office of Planning and Research, referenced in Government Code section 65302, subdivision (g)(3) and available at

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https://www.opr.ca.gov/docs/Final_6.26.15.pdf

provides policy guidance, information resources, and fire hazard planning examples from around California that shall be considered by local jurisdictions when reviewing the safety element of its general plan.

The Board of Forestry and Fire Protection (Board) utilizes this Safety Element Assessment in the Board's

Are there policies or programs promoting public outreach about defensible space or evacuation routes? Are there specific plans to reach at-risk populations?	X			-Ref. Tuolumne-Calaveras Unit Fire Plan -Ref. Vol. II Sec. A.1.K pg. 73 Legacy Communities
Fire Protection				
Does the plan identify future water supply for fire suppression needs?	X			-Ref. Vol I Policy 17.E.d pg.17-9
Does new development have adequate fire protection?	X			-Ref. Vol. I Goal 9A pg. 9-2
Develop adequate infrastructure if a new development is located in SRAs or VHFHSZs.				
	Yes	No	N/A	Comments/Recommendations
Does the plan identify adequate infrastructure for new development related to:				
Water supply and fire flow?	X			-Ref. Local Ordinance 15.20.010 -Ref. Vol I Policy 17.E.d pg.17-9
Location of anticipated water supply?	X			-Ref. Local Ordinance 15.20.010 -Ref. Vol I Policy 17.E.d pg.17-9
Maintenance and long-term integrity of water supplies?	X			-Ref. Vol. I Goal 17F
Evacuation and emergency vehicle access?	X			-Ref. Vol. I Policy 17.E.h pg. 17-9
Fuel modification and defensible space?	X			-Ref. Tuolumne-Calaveras Unit Fire Plan -Ref. Local Ordinance Sec. 15.20.060
Vegetation clearance maintenance on public and private roads?	X			-Ref. Local Ordinance Sec. 15.20.060 -Ref. Vol. I Policy 17.E.h pg. 17-9
Visible home and street addressing and signage?	X			-Ref. Local Ordinance 15.20.040 -Ref. Vol. I Policy 9.G.5 pg. 9-10
Are community fire breaks identified in the plan? Is there a discussion of how those fire breaks will be maintained?	X			-Ref. Tuolumne-Calaveras Unit Fire Plan
Working cooperatively with public agencies responsible for fire protection.				
	Yes	No	N/A	Comments/Recommendations
Is there a map or description of existing emergency service facilities and areas lacking service, specifically noting any areas in SRAs or VHFHSZs?	X			-Ref. Vol. II pgs. 224, 231, 233
Does the plan include an assessment and projection of future emergency service needs?	X			-Ref. Vol. Policy 9.A.3 pg. 9-2
Are goals or standards for emergency services training described?	X			-Ref. Vol. I Policy 9.B.3 pg. 9-4

Does the plan outline inter-agency preparedness coordination and mutual aid multi-agency agreements?	X		-Ref. Tuolumne County Hazard Mitigation Plan -Ref. Vol. I Policy 9.B.5 pg. 9-4
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Sample Safety Element Recommendations

These are examples of specific policies, objectives, or implementation measures that may be used to meet the intent of Government Code sections 65302, subdivision (g)(3) and 65302.5, subdivision (b). Safety element reviewers may make recommendations that are not included here.

A. Maps, Plans and Historical Information
1. Include or reference CAL FIRE Fire Hazard Severity Zone maps or locally adopted wildfire hazard zones.
2. Include or reference the location of historical information on wildfires in the planning area.
3. Include a map or description of the location of existing and planned land uses in SRAs and VHFHSZs, particularly habitable structures, roads, utilities, and essential public facilities.
4. Identify or reference a fire plan that is relevant to the geographic scope of the general plan, including the Unit/Contract County Fire Plan, Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, and any applicable Community Wildfire Protection Plans.
5. Align the goals, policies, objectives, and implementation measures for fire hazard mitigation in the safety element with those in existing fire plans, or make plans to update fire plans to match the safety element.
6. Create a fire plan for the planning area.
B. Land Use
1. Develop fire safe development codes to use as standards for fire protection for new development in SRAs or VHFHSZs that meet or exceed the statewide minimums in the SRA Fire Safe Regulations.
2. Adopt and have certified by the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection local ordinances which meet or exceed the minimum statewide standards in the SRA Fire Safe Regulations.
3. Identify existing development that do not meet or exceed the SRA Fire Safe Regulations or certified local ordinances.
4. Develop mitigation measures for existing development that does not meet or exceed the SRA Fire Safe Regulations or certified local ordinances or identify a policy to do so.
C. Fuel Modification
1. Develop a policy to communicate vegetation clearance requirements to seasonal, absent, or vacation rental owners.

2. Identify a policy for the ongoing maintenance of vegetation clearance on public and private roads.
3. Include fuel breaks in the layout/siting of subdivisions.
4. Identify a policy for the ongoing maintenance of existing or proposed fuel breaks.
5. Identify and/or map existing development that does not conform to current state and/or locally adopted fire safety standards for access, water supply and fire flow, signing, and vegetation clearance in SRAs or VHFHSZs.
6. Identify plans and actions for existing non-conforming development to be improved or mitigated to meet current state and/or locally adopted fire safety standards for access, water supply and fire flow, signing, and vegetation clearance.
D. Access
1. Develop a policy that approval of parcel maps and tentative maps in SRAs or VHFHSZs is conditional based on meeting the SRA Fire Safe Regulations and the Fire Hazard Reduction Around Buildings and Structures Regulations, particularly those regarding road standards for ingress, egress, and fire equipment access. (See Gov. Code, § 66474.02.)
2. Develop a policy that development will be prioritized in areas with an adequate road network and associated infrastructure.
3. Identify multi-family housing, group homes, or other community housing in SRAs or VHFHSZs and develop a policy to create evacuation or shelter in place plans.
4. Include a policy to develop pre-plans for fire risk areas that address civilian evacuation and to effectively communicate those plans.
5. Identify road networks in SRAs or VHFHSZs that do not meet title 14, CCR, division 1.5, chapter 7, subchapter 2, articles 2 and 3 (commencing with section 1273.00) or certified local ordinance and develop a policy to examine possible mitigations.
E. Fire Protection
1. Develop a policy that development will be prioritized in areas with adequate water supply infrastructure.
2. Plan for the ongoing maintenance and long-term integrity of planned and existing water supply infrastructure.
3. Map existing emergency service facilities and note any areas lacking service, especially in SRAs or VHFHSZs.
4. Project future emergency service needs for the planned land uses.
5. Include information about emergency service trainings or standards and plans to meet or maintain them.
6. Include information about inter-agency preparedness coordination or mutual aid agreements.

Fire Hazard Planning in Other Elements of the General Plan

When updating the General Plan, here are some ways to incorporate fire hazard planning into other elements. Wildfire safety is best accomplished by holistic, strategic fire planning that takes advantage of opportunities to align priorities and implementation measures within and across plans.

Land Use Element
Goals and policies include mitigation of fire hazard for future development or limit development in very high fire hazard severity zones.
Disclose wildland urban-interface hazards, including fire hazard severity zones, and/or other vulnerable areas as determined by CAL FIRE or local fire agency.
Design and locate new development to provide adequate infrastructure for the safe ingress of emergency response vehicles and simultaneously allow citizen egress during emergencies.
Describe or map any Firewise Communities or other fire safe communities as determined by the National Fire Protection Association, Fire Safe Council, or other organization.
Housing Element
Incorporation of current fire safe building codes.
Identify and mitigate substandard fire safe housing and neighborhoods relative to fire hazard severity zones.
Consider diverse occupancies and their effects on wildfire protection (group housing, seasonal populations, transit-dependent, etc).
Open Space and Conservation Elements
Identify critical natural resource values relative to fire hazard severity zones.
Include resource management activities to enhance protection of open space and natural resource values.
Integrate open space into fire safety planning and effectiveness.
Mitigation for unique pest, disease and other forest health issues leading to hazardous situations.
Circulation Element
Provide adequate access to very high fire hazard severity zones.
Develop standards for evacuation of residential areas in very high fire hazard severity zones.
Incorporate a policy that provides for a fuel reduction maintenance program along roadways.

