

Chapter 8.09 – Hazardous Vegetation and Defensible Space

Implementation Guidelines

Preamble:

Catastrophic wildfire poses a significant threat to the preservation of health, safety, and economic security across the State of California and in El Dorado County. In recognition of this, the State enacted a variety of laws and regulations beginning in 1965 to help mitigate the risk of wildfire in both wildland urban interface and intermix communities, which cover the majority of El Dorado County. The County adopted a local vegetation management and defensible space Ordinance in 2019 as one of several proactive efforts to help achieve its strategic plan goal of facilitating the creation and maintenance of fire-adapted communities.

Intent:

As stated above, the hazardous vegetation and defensible space ordinance is one tool used by the County and its partners to assist communities in becoming better adapted and more resilient to wildfire. The County's emphasis is to facilitate voluntary compliance through the ordinance by educating residents on the benefits of creating and maintaining defensible space to protect their homes and property utilizing the most cost-effective and sensible means of doing so. Whenever possible, education will also include informing residents on the variety of assistance programs available and connecting them with those resources as an aid to achieving compliance with defensible space requirements.

Since the County's adoption of the original vegetation management and defensible space ordinance in 2019 and the establishment of the County's Office of Wildfire Preparedness and Resilience in 2022, the County has been able to achieve greater compliance and through its collaboration with partnering agencies across the County, increase its education and outreach efforts to educate homeowners on the importance of defensible space. The County's focus has been and will continue to be voluntary compliance over enforcement and as the Defensible Space Program continues to evolve, this will be critical for the success of the program. The County is committed to continuing to develop its Defensible Space Program and pursue additional funding opportunities and agency partnerships to further expand existing assistance programs and maximize available resources to residents of El Dorado County.

Inspectors in the field shall value the opportunity to partner with the community and provide defensible space education, develop meaningful and reasonable plans to achieve compliance, and provide the links to available resources and assistance program whenever possible to help resident achieve compliance while working towards the goal of creating a safer and more resilient El Dorado County that will continue to thrive.

Enforcement:

In the most severe and egregious circumstances where compliance cannot be gained through working with the homeowner or property owner, and the conditions of the property have not resulted in compliance and continue to pose a threat to life and safety, this Ordinance does provide for enforcement and abatement procedures. For those instances that present an imminent threat to life and safety, as

determined by the Investigative Official and Enforcement Official, the enforcement timelines and procedures with within this Ordinance may be expedited to eliminate such risk.

Purpose:

The purpose of this document is to provide Investigative Officials with the procedures and processes related to the ongoing implementation of the hazardous vegetation and defensible space ordinance. As the implementation crosses multiple agencies, including the Office of Wildfire Preparedness and Resilience (OWPR), Chief Administrative Office, local Fire Districts, and CAL FIRE, it is imperative that a collaborative and comprehensive process be developed and implemented to ensure a uniform approach and consistent application of this Ordinance to gain compliance with the defensible space requirements.

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