



**DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND FIRE PROTECTION**  
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January 13, 2009

Carl Holm, Assistant Director  
 RMA-Planning Department  
 168 West Alisal Street  
 Salinas, California 93901

Dear Mr. Holm:

This letter is in response to your request for comments on the Comprehensive Update of the 1982 Monterey County General Plan. The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) administrative unit charged with wildland fire protection in Monterey County is known as the San Benito—Monterey Unit. CAL FIRE provides wildland fire protection to 1.3 million acres of State Responsibility Area (SRA) from seven fire stations and one conservation camp located in Monterey County. In addition to the CAL FIRE equipment located within Monterey County, there are two air tankers, an aerial command aircraft and a helicopter located in adjacent San Benito County. The state funded fire equipment located in Monterey County is sufficient to meet the stated CAL FIRE goal of controlling 95% of SRA wild fires in the first burning period.

Structural fire protection in the county (Local Responsibility Area or LRA) is the responsibility of local government and is provided by various fire protection districts and special districts, of which five have contracts with CAL FIRE to manage and staff their departments. Pebble Beach Community Services District, Cypress Fire Protection District, Carmel Highlands Fire Protection District, Aromas Tri-County Fire Protection District, and South Monterey County Fire Protection District all contract with CAL FIRE.

As I am sure you are aware, the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection (BOF/Board) is required by the Government Code (GC) Section 65302.5 to review and make recommendations on the fire safety element of general plan updates. The review and recommendations apply to general plans with SRA (Public Resources Code 4125) or Very High Hazard Severity Zones (VHFHSZ) (GC 51175).

In order to assist you and your staff, I have attached a copy of the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection General Plan Fire Safety Element Standard Recommendations. I am confident that you will find them useful in your revision process.

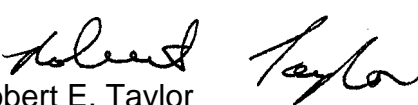
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If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to call.

Sincerely,

GEORGE W. HAINES  
Unit Chief

By

  
Robert E. Taylor  
Assistant Chief

Attachment

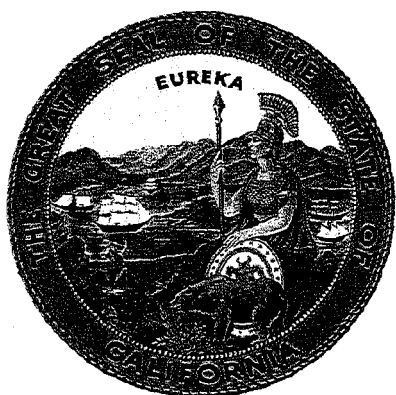
cc: Brian Barrette  
Chris Zimny

# General Plan Fire Safety Element

## Standard Recommendations

August 29, 2007

State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection



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**Purpose and Background:** The State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection (BOF/Board) is required to review and make recommendations to the fire safety element of general plan updates in accordance with Government Code (GC) §65302.5. The review and recommendations apply to those general plans with State Responsibility Area (SRA) (Public Resources Code 4125) or Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones (VHFHSZ) (GC 51175).

The statutory requirements for the Board review and recommendations pursuant to GC 65302.5 (a)(1) and (2), and (b) are as follows:

- ® "The draft elements... to the fire safety element of a county's or a city's general plan...shall be submitted to the Board at least 90 days prior to... the adoption or amendment to the safety element of its general plan [for each county or city with SRA or VHFHSZ]."
- ® "The Board shall... review the draft or an existing safety element and report *its written* recommendations to the *planning agency within 60 days of its receipt of the draft or existing safety* element...."

*Prior to adoption of* the draft element..., the Board of Supervisors... shall consider the recommendations made by the Board... If the Board of Supervisors...determines not to accept all or some of the recommendations..., " the Board of Supervisors... shall communicate in writing to the Board its reasons for not accepting the recommendations.

**Methodology for Review and Recommendations:** The Board has created a standard list of fire protection evaluation factors and recommendations related to these factors. The factors and recommendations provide civic planners general plan goals and policies for mitigation of fire hazard and risks. The factors and recommendations were developed using CAL FIRE technical documents and input from local fire departments.

The recommendations on the attached list are the Board's general recommendations for any entity.. Each entity should evaluate their general plan using the factors and include the appropriate recommendations from the list.

## Standard List of General Plan Safety Element Recommendations

**I. General Plan References and Incorporates County or Unit Fire Plan:  Yes  Partial  No**

**Recommendation:** Identify, reference or create (if necessary) a fire plan for the entity. Plan should incorporate the general concepts and standards from any county fire plan, fire protection agency (federal or state) fire plan, and local hazard mitigation plan.

**Recommendation:** Ensure fire plans incorporated by reference into the GP contain evaluations of fire hazards, assessment of assets at risk, prioritization of hazard mitigation actions, and implementation and monitoring components.

**2. Land Use Mannino:**

2.1 Goals and policies include mitigation of fire hazard for future development.  Yes  Partial  No

**Recommendation:** Ensure the fire safe development codes used as standards for fire protection for new development in the VHFHSZ portions of the entity's jurisdiction meet or exceed statewide standards used for State Responsibility Area in 14 California Code of Regulations Section 1270 et seq.

**Recommendation:** Include policies and recommendations that incorporate fire safe buffers and greenbelts as part of the development planning. Ensure that land uses designated near high or very fire hazard severity zones are compatible with wildland fire protection strategies/capabilities.

2.2 Disclosure of wildland urban interface hazards including Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones designations and Communities at Risk designations:  Yes  Partial  No

**Recommendation:** Specify whether the entity has a VHFHSZ designation and include a map of the zones. Clearly indicate any area designated VHFHSZ pursuant GC 51175. Adopt CAL FIRE proposed Fire Hazard Severity Zones including model ordinance terms and conditions developed by the Office of the State Fire Marshal for establishing VHFHSZ areas.

**3. Kousiino:**

3.1 Incorporation of current fire safe building codes.  Yes  Partial  No

**Recommendation:** Adopt the International Fire Code Council Urban Interface Model Code for new development in wildland urban interface areas in State Responsibility Areas or local Very

High Fire Hazard Severity Zones. Adopt newly proposed Title 24 CCR Midland Urban Interface Building Codes.

- 3.2 Identification of substandard fire safe housing relative to fire hazard area.  Yes  Partial  No

**Recommendation:** Identify plans and actions to improve substandard housing structure conformance with contemporary fire standards in VHFHSZ or SRA. Plans and actions should include structural rehabilitation, occupancy reduction, demolition, reconstruction, community education, and community based solutions.

- 3.3 Compatibility of development, construction and building standards relative to access, flammability and fire flow.  Yes  Partial  No

**Recommendation:** Ensure existing residential structures, and other "legacy" substandard residential structures, meet current fire safe ordinances pertaining to access, water flow, signing, and vegetation clearing.

- 3.4 Consideration of occupancy category effects on wildfire protection.  Yes  Partial  No

**Recommendation:** Ensure risks to uniquely occupied structures, such as seasonally occupied homes, multiple dwelling structures, or other structures with unique occupancy characteristics, are considered for appropriate and unique wildfire protection needs.

- 3.5 Urban development and wildfire encroachment resistance features.  Yes  Partial  No

**Recommendation:** Ensure residential housing zoning provides minimum fire safe standards, particularly in VHSZ or SRA. For example, zone designations that allow less expensive housing should conform to contemporary fire safe building and development standards.

- 3.6 Fire engineering structures (sprinklers/alarms).  Yes  Partial  No

**Recommendation:** Ensure new development proposals contain specific fire protection plans, actions or referenced codes for fire engineering features for structures in VHFHSZ. Examples include codes requiring automatic sprinklers in VHFHSZ.

#### 4. Conservation and Open Space:

- 4.1 Identification of critical natural resource values relative to fire hazard areas.  
 Yes  Partial  No

**Recommendation:** Determine maximum acceptable wildfire size and initial attack suppression success rates for protection of critical natural resources.

- 4.2 Inclusion of resource management activities to enhance protection of open space (prescribed burning, fuel breaks, vegetation thinning and removal).  Yes  Partial  No

**Recommendation:** Provide vegetation management fire mitigation measures that provide protection of open space natural resources, reduce fire hazards to adjacent assets, and allow for safe fire suppression tactics.

- 4.3 Mitigation for unique pest, disease and other forest health issues leading to hazardous situations.  Yes  Partial  No

**Recommendation:** Establish goals and policies that address unique pest, disease, exotic species and other forest health issues in open space areas relative to reducing fire hazard.

- 4.4 Integration of open space into fire safety effectiveness.  Yes  Partial  No

**Recommendation:** Establish goals and policies for reducing the wildland fire hazards within the entity's boundaries and on adjacent private wildlands, federal lands, vacant residential lots, and greenbelts. Wildland fuels should be treated in those areas to reduce the intensity of fires. Identify goals and policies for engaging adjacent wildland owners regarding hazard mitigation plans on lands with fire hazards that threaten the entity.

- 4.5 Policies for dedication, construction and maintenance of systematic fire protection improvements in open space.  Yes  Partial  No

**Recommendation:** Establish goals and policies for incorporating, systematic fire protection improvements for open space. Specifics should include standards for adequate access for firefighting, fuel modifications for open space within and on the perimeter of the entity, mitigation planning with agencies managing open space, water sources for fire suppression, and other fire prevention and suppression needs.

- 4.6 Urban forestry plans relative to fire protection:  Yes  Partial  No

**Recommendation:** Ensure residential areas have appropriate fire resistant landscapes and discontinuous vegetation adjacent to open space or wildland areas.

**Recommendation:** Evaluate and resolve existing laws and local ordinances which conflict with fire protection requirements. Examples include conflicts with vegetation hazard reduction ordinances and listed species habitat protection requirements.

## 5. Circulation and Access:

- 5.1 Existing and planned transportation system incorporates requirements for designs that minimize wildfire damage to natural resources and minimizes hazards to human life.  
 Yes  Partial  No

**Recommendation:** Incorporate adequate access for firefighting, especially for existing "legacy" neighborhoods in VHFHSZ, SRA. Goals for standards for access should be consistent to those in 14 CCR 1270.

- 5.2 Adequacy of existing and future transportation system to incorporate fire infrastructure elements such as turnouts, helispots and safety zones.  Yes  Partial  No

**Recommendation:** Establish goals and policies for transportation system fire infrastructure elements or otherwise reference appropriate supporting documents where these topics are addressed.

- 5.3 Adequate access to high hazard areas.  Yes  Partial  No

**Recommendation:** Establish goals and policies that delineate high hazard areas, establish adequate access that meets or exceeds standards in 14 CCR 1270 for lands with no structures, and maintaining conditions of access in a suitable fashion for suppression access or public evacuation.

- 5.4 Standards for evacuation of residential areas in high hazard areas.  Yes  Partial  No

**Recommendation:** Goals and policies should be established to delineate residential evacuation routes and evacuation plans in high fire hazard residential areas.

## 6. Hazard Mapping and Fire Safe Regulations:

- 6.1 Fire Hazard Mapping Designations  Yes  Partial  No

**Recommendation:** Specify whether the entity has an official VHFHSZ designation and include a map of the zones. Clearly indicate any VHFHSZ pursuant GC 51175. Adopt CAL FIRE proposed Fire Hazard Severity Zones.

Adopt or incorporate local fire safe ordinances which meet or exceed standards similar to those in 14 CCR § 1270 for State Responsibility Area.  Yes  partial  No

**Recommendation:** Establish goals and policies for specific ordinances addressing evacuation and emergency vehicle access; water supplies and fire flow; fuel modification for defensible space; and home addressing and signing.

- 6.3 Geographic specific mitigation measures for fuel modification and fire risk reduction.  Yes  Partial  No

**Recommendation:** Establish goals and policies that identify structures that have adequate fuel modification or other features that provide adequate fire fighter safety when tactics call for protection of a specific asset (i.e. which houses are safe to protect).



- 6.4 Fuel Modification around homes.  Yes  Partial  No

**Recommendation:** Establish ordinances in VHFHSZ for vegetation fire hazard reduction around structures that meet or exceed the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection's Defensible Space Guidelines, ([http://www.bof.fire.ca.gov/pdfs/Copvof4291finalguideilines9\\_29\\_06.pdf](http://www.bof.fire.ca.gov/pdfs/Copvof4291finalguideilines9_29_06.pdf)) for SRA.

- 6.5 Adequacy of defense zones.  Yes  Partial  No

**Recommendation:** Establish goals and policies for wildfire defense zones for emergency services including fuel breaks, back fire areas, or other staging areas that support safe fire suppression activities.

## 7. Emergency Services:

- 7.1 Map/description of existing emergency service facilities and areas lacking services:

Yes  Partial  No

**Recommendation:** Include descriptions, maps, and standards for levels of emergency services. Review, develop or incorporate Local Agency Formation municipal services reviews *for evaluating level of service, response times, equipments condition levels and other relevant emergency service information.*

**Recommendation:** *Incorporate goals and policies that establish emergency services consistent with state or national standards.*

**Recommendation:** Ensure new development includes appropriate facilities to assist and support wildfire suppression.

- 7.2 Assessment and projection future emergency service needs: *QD* Yes  Partial  No

**Recommendation:** Establish goals and policies for new development emergency service needs and ensure appropriate levels of service are established consistent with state or national standards.

- 7.3 Adequacy of training.  Yes  Partial  No

**Recommendation:** Establish goals and policies for emergency service training that meets or exceeds state or national standards.

- 7.4 Inter-fire service coordination preparedness/mutual aid and multi jurisdictional fire service agreements.  Yes  Partial  No

**Recommendation:** Adopt the Standardized Emergency Management Systems for responding to large scale disasters requiring a multi-agency response. Ensure and review mutual aid and cooperative agreements with adjoining emergency service providers.

**8. Post Recovery and Maintenance:** The Recovery and Maintenance recommendations address an opportunity for the community and landowners to re-evaluate land uses and practices that affect future wildfire hazards and risk.

8.1 Reevaluate hazard conditions.  Yes  Partial  No

**Recommendation:** Incorporate goals and policies that provide for reassessment of fire hazards following wildfire events. Adjust fire prevention and suppression needs commensurate for both short and long term fire protection needs. Develop bum area recovery plans that incorporate comprehensive recovery and fire safe maintenance.

8.2 Incorporate wildlife habitat//endangered species considerations.  Yes  Partial  No

**Recommendation:** Establish goals and policies for consideration of wildlife habitat//endangered species into long term fire area recovery and protection plans.

8.3 Native species reintroduction.  Yes  Partial  No

**Recommendation:** Incorporate native species habitat needs as part of long term fire protection and fire restoration plans.

8.4 Evaluation of redevelopment.  Yes  Partial  No

**Recommendation:** In High and Very hazardous areas, ensure redevelopment utilizes state of the art fire resistant building standards with 100 foot set backs (when possible) to ensure adequate defensible space is maintained around structures.

8.5 Long term maintenance of fire hazard reduction mitigation projects  Yes  Partial  No

**Recommendation:** Provide polices and goals for maintenance of fire hazard reduction projects, activities, or infrastructure.

**9. Flood and Landslides:** Recommendations for flood and landslides hazards, risks and vulnerabilities relative to past wildfire should be developed to mitigate potential losses to life, human assets and critical natural resources.

9.1 Establish flood and landslide vulnerability areas related to post wildfire conditions.  
 Yes  Partial  No

**Recommendation:** Establish goals and policies that address the intersection of flood /landslide/post fire bum areas into long term public safety protection plans. These should include treatment assessment of fire related flood risk to life, methods to control storm runoff in bum areas, revegetation of bum areas, and drainage crossing debris maintenance.

**10. Terrorist Preparedness and homeland security impacts on wildfire protection:**

*These recommendations are included to ensure that terrorist preparedness actions do not substantially increase fire risk or unduly restrict emergency response.*

- 10.1 Communication channels during incidences.  Yes  Partial  No

**Recommendation:** Establish goals and policies consistent with the Governor's Blue Ribbon Fire Commission of 2005 for communications and interoperability. Example goals and policies should address fire personnel capability to communicate effectively across multiple frequency bands and update and expansion of current handheld and mobile radios used on major mutual aid incidents.

- 10.2 Fire prevention barriers.  Yes  Partial  No

**Recommendation:** Identify goals and policies that address vital access routes that if removed would prevent fire fighter access (bridges, dams, etc.). Develop an alternative emergency access plan for these areas.

- 10.3 *Prioritizing asset protection from fire with lack of suppression forces.*  Yes  Partial  No

**Recommendation:** Identify and prioritize protection needs for assets at risk in the absence of response forces.

**Recommendation:** Establish fire defense zones that provide adequate fire protection without dependency on air attack.

End Standard Recommendations (version 8/29/07)