



Fire Safety

State Minimum Regulations

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Overview

Fire Safety Community Outreach

- Introduction
- Applicability of the State Minimum Fire Safe Regulations
- Requirements of the State Minimum Fire Safe Regulations
- County process for Development Applications and Land Use Entitlements in the covered areas
- Exceptions and Appeals process recently adopted by the County
- Proposed changes to the State Minimum Fire Safe Regulations

Introduction

Wildfire Risk

State-wide risk

- Wildfires have increased in number and intensity, especially over the last five years
- Wildfires threaten communities, sensitive habitats, and fire responders

Severe wildfires are likely to continue to occur

Photo credit: fire.ca.gov

Introduction

County Risk Mitigation

Policies

- The County General Plan discourages increase to density and use in the rural areas most at risk to wildfires
- County Fire has developed site specific plans to mitigate fire risks

The General Plan limits development type and intensity

Actions

- County Fire works with local neighborhoods to remove vegetation
- County Fire and Parks use prescribed burns to reduce risk

County Fire works with other agencies and local communities

Photo credit: sccfd.org

The County largely supports the goals of the Board of Forestry and other State entities to reduce the risks related to wildfires.

Applicability

Geographic

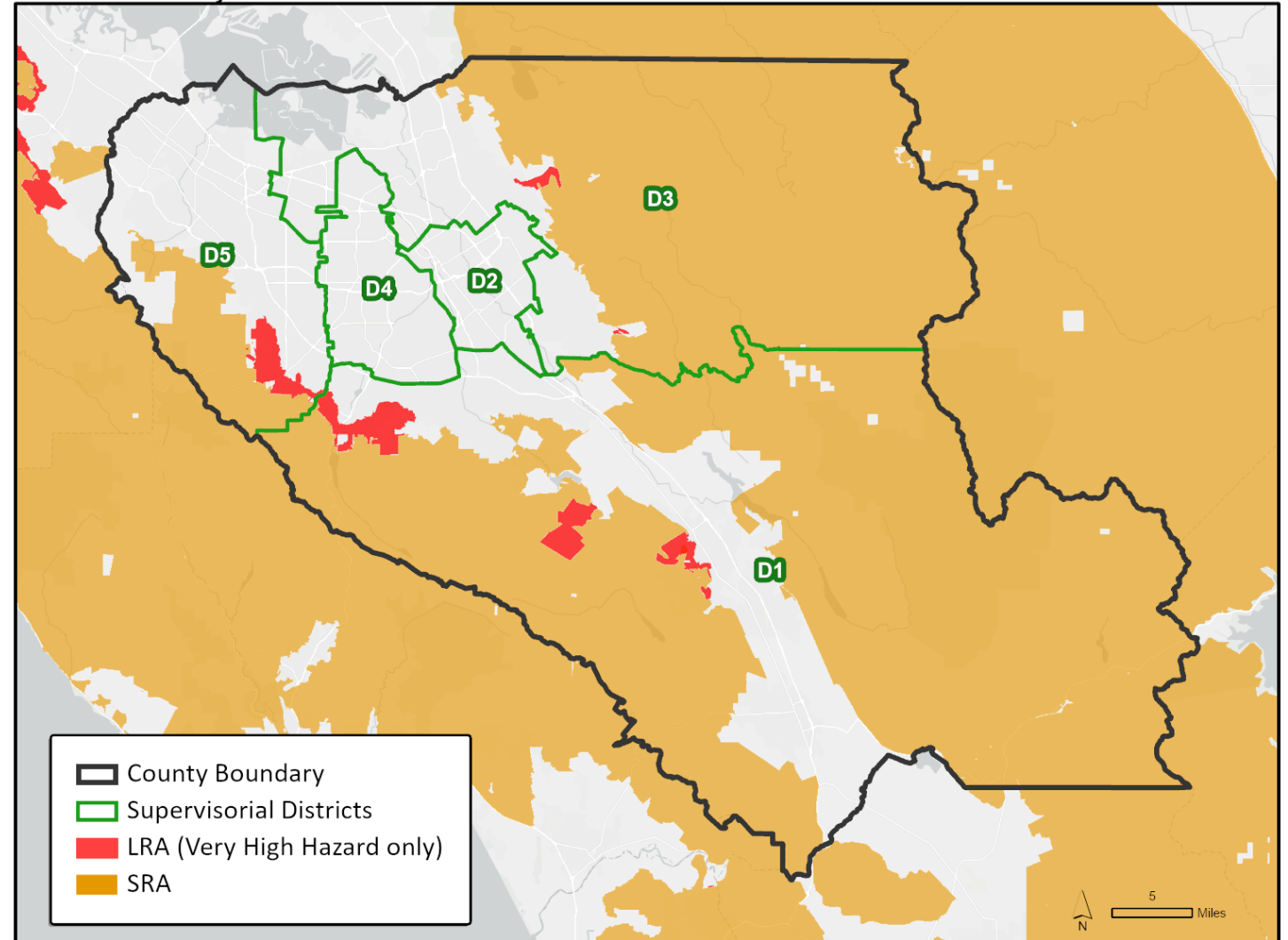
State Responsibility Area (SRA)

Areas are classified based on primary fire responder: Federal, State, or Local Responsibility Areas. CAL-FIRE reviews development in the SRA in our County

Local Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (VHFHSZ)

Areas are separately classified based on the Fire Hazard Severity: low, moderate, high, or very high

Santa Clara County Fire Hazard Districts



Applicability

Activities

Current Regulations

- Cover on-site improvements and access to site for residential, commercial, and industrial projects in the SRA and Local VHFHSZ
- Offer exemptions for wildfire rebuilds, ADUs, agriculture, mining, and forestry
- Are not retroactive, but are triggered by most planning applications and building permits for new or expanded structures



Requirements

State Minimum Fire Regulations

Road Requirements

- Set minimum road widths (two ten-foot traffic lanes)
- Set minimum weight requirements (75,000 pounds)
- Set maximum grade (16% with few exceptions)
- Set minimum turning radius (50 feet)
- Set turnout and turnaround requirements
- Set maximum length of one-way and dead-end roads
- Set standards for signage and numbering

Water Requirements

Defensible Space Requirements

Driveway Requirements



CAL-FIRE is currently requiring improvements on existing roads

New County Ordinance

Implementation of State Minimum Fire Regulations

Summary of provisions

- Clarifies that Fire Marshal's Office is responsible for initial inspections/compliance of State Minimum Fire Regulations in the Local VHFHSZ
- Establishes that Fire Marshal's Office handles Exception requests in the Local VHFHSZ
- Creates process to appeal Exception determinations
 - For projects in SRA, appeals heard by Fire Marshal's Office staff in consultation with the Director of Roads and Airports and the Building Official
 - For projects in LRA VHFHSZ, appeals heard by Fire Marshal
 - All appeals shall include a public hearing and decisions are final



Application Process

In SRA

Applicant submits to
County, plans routed
to CAL Fire

Applicant submits
Exception Request
to **CAL Fire**

Applicant appeals
Exception Determination
to **County**

Applicant submits to
County, plans routed
to County Fire

Applicant submits
Exception Request to
County

Applicant appeals
Exception Determination
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In LRA VHFHSZ

Proposed Amendments

State Minimum Fire Regulations

Key Changes in May draft

- Stricter standards for new dead-end and one-way roads
- Stricter standards for defensible space and water supply
- Separate standards for existing roads (**many existing roads in our County would not meet proposed standards**)



Santa Clara County has asked that more exemptions be created for existing lots along existing roads, recreational uses, and other low-density improvements

**Board of Forestry is integrating public feedback; a new draft is expected soon
Concerned individuals should engage in this process**

Summary

1. Wildfires are, and will likely, continue to be an **area of high concern**; State will continue to implement regulations to reduce risk
2. State Minimum Fire Regulations apply to new development in the **SRA** and the **Local VHFHSZ** (as of July 1, 2021)
3. The County has implemented a process for handling **Exception requests in the LRA VHFHSZ** or **appeals** in either area
4. The California **Board of Forestry** is reviewing the **State Minimum Fire Regulations**; applicability or specific requirements may change in the next year



Questions?

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