

General Plan Safety Element Assessment

Board of Forestry and Fire Protection



LA County

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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 (OPR), referenced in Government Code section 65302, subdivision (g)(3) and available at

1400 Tenth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814
Phone: (916) 322-2318

The Technical Advice Series is also available from the OPR website ([Technical Advice Series link](#)).^{*} The Technical Advice Series 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 review of safety elements under Government Code section 65302.5. At least 90 days prior to the adoption or amendment of their safety element, counties that contain SRAs and cities or counties that contain VHFHSZs shall submit their safety element to the Board. (Gov. Code, § 65302.5, subd. (b).) The Board shall review the safety element and respond to the city or county with its findings regarding the uses of land and policies in SRAs or VHFHSZs that will protect life, property, and natural resources from

unreasonable risks associated with wildfires, and the methods and strategies for wildfire risk reduction and prevention within SRAs or VHFHSZs. (Gov. Code, § 65302.5, subd. (b)(3).) The CAL FIRE Land Use Planning team provides expert fire protection assistance to local jurisdictions statewide. Fire captains are available to work with cities and counties to revise their safety elements and enhance their strategic fire protection planning.

Methodology for Review and Recommendations

Utilizing staff from the CAL FIRE Land Use Planning team, the Board has established a standardized method to review the safety element of general plans. The methodology includes

- 1) reviewing the safety element for the requirements in Government Code section 65302, subdivision (g)(3)(A),
- 2) examining the safety element for goals, policies, objectives, and implementation measures that mitigate the wildfire risk in the planning area (Gov. Code, § 65302, subd. (g)(3)(B) & (C)), and
- 3) making recommendations for methods and strategies that would reduce the risk of wildfires (Gov. Code, § 65302.5, subd. (b)(3)(B)).

The safety element will be evaluated against the attached Assessment, which contains questions to determine if a safety element meets the fire safety planning requirements outlined in Government Code, section 65302. The reviewer will answer whether or not a submitted safety element addresses the required information, and will recommend changes to the safety element that will reduce the wildfire risk in the planning area. These recommended changes may come from the list of sample goals, policies, objectives, and implementation measures that is included in this document after the Assessment, or may be based on the reviewer's knowledge of the jurisdiction in question and their specific wildfire risk. By answering the questions in the Assessment, the reviewer will determine if the jurisdiction's safety element has adequately addressed and mitigated their wildfire risk. If it hasn't, any specific recommendations from the reviewer will assist the jurisdiction in revising the safety element so that it does.

Once completed, the Assessment should provide clear guidance to a city or county regarding any areas of deficiency in the safety element as well as specific goals, policies, objectives, and implementation measures the Board recommends adopting in order to mitigate or reduce the wildfire threat in the planning area.

General Plan Safety Element Assessment

Jurisdiction: LA County	Notes: Formal Review	CAL FIRE Unit: BDU	Date Received:
County: LA County	LUPP Reviewer: Redden	UNIT CONTACT: Ron Janssen	Date Reviewed: 12/20/2021

BACKGROUND INFORMATION SUMMARY

The safety element must contain specific background information about fire hazards in each jurisdiction.

Instructions for this table: Indicate whether the safety element includes the specified information. If YES, indicate in the comments where that information can be found; if NO, provide recommendations to the jurisdiction regarding how best to include that information in their revised safety element.

Required Information	Yes or No	Comments and Recommendations
Are Fire Hazard Severity Zones Identified? <i>CAL FIRE or Locally Adopted Maps</i>	Yes	Fire Hazard Severity Zones Policy Map Figure 12.5 shows the FHSZs based on CALFIRE's data. The map was updated in October 2021 with the latest Responsibility Area data from CALFIRE. https://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/gp_2035_2021-FIG_12-5_Fire_Hazard_Severity_Zones_Policy_Map_Responsibility.pdf
Is historical data on wildfires or a reference to where the data can be found, and information about wildfire hazard areas that may be available from the United States Geological Survey, included?	Yes	VII-Historic Wildfires in Los Angeles County, Tables H.6 and H.7 (Page 15 to 17, Appendix H) List all historic fires within Los Angeles County from 2007 to 2020 including the acreage and total structures burned of each fire.
Has 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, been identified?	Yes	LA County has an online mapping tool, GIS-NET, that shows existing structures, land use designations and hazards (as layers). For Fire, this would include VHFHSZs and Responsibility Areas. https://planning.lacounty.gov/site/climate/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/FIG_H-1_Flood_Fire_Zones_Existing_Development.pdf https://planning.lacounty.gov/site/climate/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/FIG_H-2_Flood_Fire_Zones_Planned_Development.pdf https://planning.lacounty.gov/site/climate/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/FIG_H-3_Flood_Fire_Zones_streets.pdf

Required Information	Yes or No	Comments and Recommendations
Have local, state, and federal agencies with responsibility for fire protection, including special districts and local offices of emergency services, been identified?	Yes	The local and state agencies responsible for fire protections are discussed on P. 7-8, lines 189-204. The CA Fire Strategic plan is referenced as a guide for how local, state and federal agencies cooperate.
Are other fire protection plans, such as Community Wildfire Protection Plans, Local Hazard Mitigation Plans, CAL FIRE Unit or Contract County Fire Plans, referenced or incorporated into the Safety Element?	Yes	A Countywide Community Wildfire Protection Program is proposed as an implementation program on page 21. The All-Hazard Mitigation Plan is described on P. 1, lines 23-29. Policy S 4.9: (Strategic Fire Plan-Page 19) Policy S 7.8: (AHMP-Page 34)
Are residential developments in hazard areas that do not have at least two emergency evacuation routes identified?	Yes.	Text and Table 12.3 in pg. 27-29 lists communities that have limited egress (less than 2). GIS App showing communities with limited access. Link is added in the text on pg. 27. Link is http://bit.ly/SE-SB99 .
Have evacuation routes and their capacity, safety, and viability under a range of emergency scenarios been identified?	Yes	Figure 12.9 shows possible evacuation routes as a policy map. See website to download the draft policy map. See pg. 27 for text: “Identifying Possible Evacuation Routes Assembly Bill 747 (Levine, 2019) requires the Safety Element to identify evacuation routes and their capacity, safety, and viability under a range of emergency scenarios. Evacuation routes are determined by emergency responders who decide at the time of the emergency the routes that should be used for evacuation after assessing the conditions and location of the emergency to avoid endangering the lives of others, personal injury, or death. Evaluating a route for safety and viability is situational, context-specific, and subject to change.” Figure 12.9 Identifies roads that are public, paved, and through-ways, which may be used for evacuation if they are viable routes during an actual emergency.

Is there any other information in the Safety Element regarding fire hazards in SRAs or VHFHSZs?

N/A

GOALS, POLICIES, OBJECTIVES, AND FEASIBLE IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

The safety element must contain a set of goals, policies, and objectives based on the above information to protect the community from unreasonable risk of wildfire and implementation measures to accomplish those stated goals, policies, and objectives.

Instructions for this table: Critically examine the submitted safety element and determine if it is adequate to address the jurisdiction's unique fire hazard. Answer YES or NO appropriately for each question below. If the recommendation is irrelevant or unrelated to the jurisdiction's fire hazard, answer N/A. For NO, provide information in the Comments/Recommendations section to help the jurisdiction incorporate that change into their safety element revision. This information may utilize example recommendations from Sample Safety Element Recommendations and Fire Hazard Planning in Other Elements of the General Plan below, may indicate how high of a priority this recommendation is for a jurisdiction, or may include other jurisdiction-specific information or recommendations.

Section 1 Avoiding or minimizing the wildfire hazards associated with new uses of land		
Questions	Yes or No	Comments and Recommendations
Does local ordinance require development standards that meet or exceed title 14, CCR, division 1.5, chapter 7, subchapter 2, articles 1-5 (commencing with section 1270) (SRA Fire Safe Regulations) and title 14, CCR, division 1.5, chapter 7, subchapter 3, article 3 (commencing with section 1299.01) (Fire Hazard Reduction Around Buildings and Structures Regulations) for SRAs and/or VHFHSZs?	Yes	Policy S 4.16, Page 4
Are there goals and policies to avoid or minimize new residential development in VHFHSZs?	Yes	Policy S 4.1, Page 3 Policy S 4.14, Page 4
Has fire safe design been incorporated into future development requirements?	Yes	Policy S 4.16, Page 4
Are new essential public facilities located outside high fire risk areas, such as VHFHSZs, when feasible?	Yes	Policy S 7.7, Page 6
Are there plans or actions identified to mitigate existing non-conforming development to contemporary fire safe standards, in terms of road standards and vegetative hazard?	Yes	Policy S 4.8, Page 4 Policy S 4.1, Page 3
Does the plan include policies to evaluate re-development after a large fire?	Yes	The Disaster Recovery Ordinance establishes regulations for the orderly recovery of residents, businesses, and property in the unincorporated areas after a disaster. The ordinance expands existing regulations for temporary housing for residents displaced by a disaster and establishes procedures for the replacement of buildings and

Questions	Yes or No	Comments and Recommendations
		<p>structures and the reestablishment of uses damaged or destroyed by a disaster. The ordinance will amend Title 22 (Planning and Zoning) to speed recovery in the unincorporated communities of Los Angeles County after a disaster.</p> <p>https://planning.lacounty.gov/dro</p>
Is fuel modification around homes and subdivisions required for new development in SRAs or VHFHSZs?	Yes	<p>Policy S 4.4, Page 4.3 Policy S 4.17, Page 4.4</p>
Are fire protection plans required for new development in VHFHSZs?	Yes	<p>Policy S 4.18, Page 4.4</p>
Does the plan address long term maintenance of fire hazard reduction projects, including community fire breaks and private road and public road clearance?	Yes	<p>Policy S 4.17, Page 4.4 Page 8, lines 215-219: Text describes the role of County Fire to ensure emergency access. The following table references Title 21 which sets out access road requirements, and Title 32 which provides guidelines for the Clearance of brush and vegetative growth. Page 9-10, lines 247-264: Text describes the Integrated Vegetation Management Plan which addresses reducing fuel. Page 22 describes a proposed implementation program, The Unified Vegetation Management Plan, which will address reducing fuel adjacent to existing subdivisions and new development areas.</p>
Is there adequate access (ingress, egress) to new development in VHFHSZs?	Yes	<p>Policy S 4.2, Page 4.2</p>
Are minimum standards for evacuation of residential areas in VHFHSZs defined?	Yes	<p>Methodology for identifying evacuation routes is included in pg. 22-23 of Appendix H. VIII. "Possible Evacuation Routes Methodology for Identifying Possible Evacuation Routes Evacuation routes are determined by emergency responders at the time of the emergency the routes that should be used for evacuation after assessing the conditions and location of the emergency to avoid endangering the lives of others, personal injury, or death. Roads that were (1) public, (2) paved, and (3) through-ways were identified as possible evacuation routes. 23 To identify these roads, two</p>

Questions	Yes or No	Comments and Recommendations
		<p>datasets were combined: (1) the Master Plan of Highways (updated May 30, 2019), and (2) the Countywide Address Management System (CAMS). The Master Plan of Highways designates roadways in Los Angeles County by their planned capacity. All roads from this dataset were coded possible evacuation routes because all roads were public and paved. From the CAMS dataset, all primary and secondary roads were coded as possible evacuation routes because they met all three criteria. Other categories in the CAMS dataset, such as trails, dirt roads, onramps, offramps, some driveways, some private roads, and pedestrian walkways were excluded. Gates or road obstacles were not identified due to lack of data. Information on the capacity of these roads is available by clicking on the following links: (1) Master Plan of Highways - Overview (arcgis.com), and (2) CAMS Data (arcgis.com). The County also classifies some roads as disaster routes (last updated September 9, 2015 by PW). Disaster routes are freeway, highway or arterial routes pre-identified for use during times of crisis. These routes are utilized to bring in emergency personnel, equipment, and supplies to impacted areas in order to save lives, protect property, and minimize impact to the environment. During a disaster, these routes have priority for clearing, repairing, and restoration over all other roads. Disaster routes are not evacuation routes. Although an emergency may warrant a road to be used as both a disaster and evacuation route, an evacuation route is used to move affected populations out of an impacted area.”</p>
<p>If areas exist with inadequate access/evacuation routes, are they identified? Are mitigation measures or improvement plans identified?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Table 12.3 lists the community with residential development with inadequate access.</p>
<p>Are there policies or programs promoting public outreach about defensible space or evacuation routes? Are there specific plans to reach at-risk populations?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Community Risk Reduction and Adaptation Planning: Text provides a link to the Fire Department's website for more information about developing a personal evacuation plan, creating defensible space, and brush clearance.</p>

Questions	Yes or No	Comments and Recommendations
Does the plan identify future water supply for fire suppression needs?	Yes	Policy S 4.6, Page 3 Policy S 4.19, Page 4
Does new development have adequate fire protection?	Yes	Policy S 7.5, Page 6

Section 2 Develop adequate infrastructure if a new development is located in SRAs or VHFHSZs.

Does the plan identify adequate infrastructure for new development related to:	Yes or No	Comments and Recommendations
Water supply and fire flow?	Yes	Policy S 4.12, Page 4
Location of anticipated water supply?	Yes	Policy S 4.6, Page 3
Maintenance and long-term integrity of water supplies?	Yes	Policy S 4.19, Page 4
Evacuation and emergency vehicle access?	Yes	Policy S 4.2, Page 3
Fuel modification and defensible space?	Yes	Policy S 4.4, Page 3
Vegetation clearance maintenance on public and private roads?	Yes	Policy S 4.16, Page 4
Visible home and street addressing and signage?	Yes	Policy S 4.16, Page 4
Community fire breaks? Is there a discussion of how those fire breaks will be maintained?	Yes	Policy S 4.17, Page 4

Section 3 Working cooperatively with public agencies responsible for fire protection.

Question	Yes or No	Comments and Recommendations
Is there a map or description of existing emergency service facilities and areas lacking service, specifically noting any areas in SRAs or VHFHSZs?	Yes	Figure 12.7 Fire Department Battalions and Stations
Does the plan include an assessment and projection of future emergency service needs?	Yes	Figure H.2 Flood/Fire-Planned Development Figure 12.7 Fire Department Battalions and Stations Policy S 4.12, Page 4
Are goals or standards for emergency services training described?	Yes	Text describes the goals and training of the Fire and Sherriff department and other departments involved with emergency response on pages 29 and 30.
Does the plan outline inter-agency preparedness coordination and mutual aid multi-agency agreements?	Yes	Page 31 describes the coordination between agencies within the County as well as with other jurisdictions during an emergency.

Question	Yes or No	Comments and Recommendations
		Additional information provided on Operational Area Emergency Response Plan (OAERP) on page 27 with a link included.

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.