Vegetation Management & Defensible Space Ordinance in El Dorado County

Oak Hill Fire Safe Council
February 11, 2020
Overview

- Why Vegetation Mgmt?
- Defensible Space
- Lean, Clean & Green
- Good Neighbors
- Community Education
- Clearning Land
- Compliance & Monitoring
- More Information
Why Vegetation Management?

- In recent years, California has experienced large and devastating wildfires
  - **2018 Camp Fire** (Butte County): 86 deaths; 18,804 structures destroyed
  - **2018 Carr Fire** (Shasta County): 8 deaths; 1,604 structures destroyed
  - **2017 Thomas Fire** (Ventura, Santa Barbara Counties): 23 deaths*; 1,063 structures destroyed
    *21 deaths attributed to mudslides/debris flow in the burn scar
  - **2017 Tubbs Fire** (Napa, Sonoma Counties): 22 deaths; 5,643 structures destroyed

- El Dorado County fires
  - **2014 King Fire** (Pollock Pines, North County): 12 homes destroyed
  - **2014 Sand Fire** (South County): 19 homes destroyed
  - **2007 Angora Fire** (Meyers and South Lake Tahoe): 254 homes destroyed
EDC Ordinance 5101, Chapter 8.09*

Provides for the removal of hazardous vegetation and combustible materials situated in the unincorporated areas of the county to:

- Build upon the existing grassroots efforts being done Countywide (e.g. Fire Safe Councils, FA 50, SOFAR, etc.)
- Reduce the potential for fire, and
- Promote the safety and well-being of the community

*Effective May 30, 2019; revised February 11, 2020
Defensible Space

What is it?

Area around a structure where combustible vegetation has been cleared, reduced or replaced.

Space that acts as a barrier between a structure and an advancing fire.

One of the most cost-effective ways to protect a building from a wildfire (FEMA).
Community Education

- Vegetation management is an ongoing, long-term activity
- Involves presence and dialogue with residents and landowners
- Encourage and promote proactive removal and voluntary compliance
- Community meetings
- Information and on-site education (CEAs)
- Partner with local fire safe councils, fire districts, Emergency Preparedness & Response and others
Where do I start...

...A few options
Lean, Clean & Green

- Ordinance 5101, Chapter 8
- 100 feet of clearance
- Lean
  - Small amounts of flammable vegetation
- Clean
  - No accumulation of dead vegetation or other flammable debris
- Green
  - Plants that remain healthy and green during fire season
Large trees do not have to be cut and removed, as long as all plants beneath them are removed. This eliminates the fuel ladder.

Horizontal spacing depends on the slope of the land and the height of the shrubs or trees.
Many homes do not have 100’ of space between structures and parcel lines.

Property owners are required to maintain defensible space to their property line.

Work with neighbors to help provide defensible space for their homes, and ask neighbors for help if their property threatens yours.

In most cases, the most effective solution is a cooperative approach between neighbors.
Goatscaping or Targeted Grazing
Mowing and Trimming
Chipping and Masticating
Other Options for Land Clearing

- Burn piles (in compliance with AQMD rules and dates. Never leave unattended)
- Eco-friendly sprays or mulching
- Fire Safe Councils
- Neighborhood co-op
- Contractors (ensure they are licensed and insured)
Equipment Use Reminders

- Mow and use equipment before 10 am
- Never mow on a hot or windy day
- String trimmers are safer options than lawn mowers
2020 Defensible Space Inspections
Compliance & Monitoring: Today through 2020

Ongoing

Community Education
County staff, in coordination with Fire Safe Councils, CAL FIRE and local Fire Districts, will provide education to the public and property owners on the ordinance.

On or before February 15, 2020

Notification Letters
Properties in the identified areas will be mailed a notice that vegetation must be removed by June 1, 2020. A sample inspection checklist will be included with the letter and posted on the web.

June 1, 2020 & Beyond

Compliance Inspections
Inspections will begin in the identified areas

- County Emphasis Areas (CEA)
- Wildfire Risk Areas (WRA)
Defensible Space Inspections

Enforcement and Investigative Officials

Enforcement Official: Chief Administrative Officer or Designee

Investigative Official: CAL FIRE, Fire Chief of any district in the County or Designee

Inspection(s)

A “Notice of Defensible Space Inspection” report will identify if the property is in compliance with the ordinance or if violations need to be corrected and a date for re-inspection. Three failed inspections will result in a Hazard Abatement Notice.

Enforcement

Violations of the ordinance, may initiate the following:

- Meet and confer
- Hazard Abatement Notice
- Appeals hearing
- Forced abatement for repeated non-compliance
County Emphasis Areas (CEA)

An area designated by the County for focused, proactive inspections.

The County works with CAL FIRE to identify these areas annually.

Methodology and criteria used to determine CEAs

- Call volume to a specific area
- Structural density of an area
- Ingress/egress
- Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone rating
- Fire history/ignition history
- Prevailing weather patterns
- Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)
- Topography
- Existing PRC 4291 data
2020 Defensible Space Inspections

NOTICE OF DEFENSIBLE SPACE INSPECTION
An El Dorado County representative has inspected your property for the hazards. You are hereby notified to correct the violations indicated below. Failure to correct these violations may result in a station and fire.

Zone 1 / Within 30 feet of all habitable structures (Refer to Illustration below):
- A. Remove all branches within 10 feet of any chimney or stovepipe outlet, pursuant to RMC § 4291(1)(b) and 1d CCR § 1290.03(a)(2).
- B. Remove leaves, needles or other vegetation on roofs, gutters, decks, patios, attics, stairs, etc., pursuant to RMC § 4291(1)(b) and 1d CCR § 1290.03(a)(1).
- C. Remove all dead and dying trees, branches and shrubs, or other plants adjacent to or overhanging buildings, pursuant to RMC § 4291(1)(a) and 1d CCR § 1290.03(a)(2).
- D. Remove all dead and dying grass, plants, shrubs, trees, branches, leaves, needles, and other plant fuels, pursuant to 1d CCR § 1290.03(a)(1).
- E. Remove or separate fine flammable ground cover and shrubs, pursuant to RMC § 4291(1)(a) and BOF General Guidelines Item 1.
- F. Remove flammable vegetation and items that could catch fire which are adjacent to, or below, combustible decks, balconies, and patios, pursuant to 1d CCR § 1290.03(a)(4).
- G. Relocate exposed wood piles outside of Zone 1 unless completely covered in a fire-resistant material, pursuant to 1d CCR § 1290.03(a)(3).

Zone 2 / Within 30-100 feet of all habitable structures (Refer to Illustration below):
- H. Cut annual grasses and tops down to a minimum height of 4 inches, pursuant to 1d CCR § 1290.03(a)(2)(B).
- I. Remove fuels in accordance with the Fuel Separation or Contiguous Tree canopy guidelines (see below), pursuant to BOF General Guidelines Item 1.
- J. All exposed woodpiles must have a minimum of 10 feet clearance, down to bare mineral soil, in all directions, pursuant to 1d CCR § 1290.03(a)(2)(C).
- K. Dead and dying woody surface fuels and grass fuels shall be removed. Loose surface litter, normally consisting of fallen leaves or needles, twigs, bark, cones, and small branches, shall be permitted to a maximum depth of 3 inches, pursuant to 1d CCR § 1290.03(a)(2)(A).

Defensible and Reduced Fuel Zone / Within 100 feet of all habitable structures (Refer to Illustration below):
- L. Logs or stumps embedded in the soil must be removed or isolated from other vegetation, pursuant to BOF General Guidelines Item 3.

Other Requirements:
- M. Cuttings and Leafy Poplar (LPG) storage tanks shall have 10 feet of clearance to bare mineral soil and no flammable vegetation for an additional 10 feet around their exterior, pursuant to 1d CCR § 1290.03(a)(1).
- N. Address numbers shall be displayed in contrasting colors (e.g., white) and readable from the street or access road, pursuant to 2016 CBC § 635.1.
- O. Equip chimney or stovepipe openings with a metal screen having openings between 3/8 inch and 1/2 inch, pursuant to 2016 CBC § 2113.9.2.

IMPORTANT: All violations marked must be addressed by the owner/tenant. A re-inspection of the property will occur on or after Date: ____________________________

LEARN MORE:
2020 CEA: Garden Valley
Johntown/Garden Park

- Beehive Drive
- Chrysler Circle
- Garden Park Drive
- Hancock Court
- Hancock Road
- Hollow Oak Court
- Hood Court
- Johntown Creek Road
- Kahala Road
- Lazy Brook Trail
- Lynx Ridge Road
- McKinley Drive
- Olympus Drive
- Pyramid Court
- Pikes Peak Circle
- Providence Hill Road
- Rainier Drive
- Roller Coaster Road
- Sailor Ridge Road
- Shaker Lane
- Shasta Road
- Tamalpais Road
- Tedlo Court
2020 CEA: Pollock Pines
Sly Park Area

- Aerie Road
- Agate Court
- Bela Vista Drive
- Bushwacker Lane
- Diamond Court
- Diamond Drive
- Diolinda Court
- Garnet Court
- Garnet Road
- Gold Ridge Trail (partial)
- Jenkinson Circle
- Lava Lane
- Lakeridge Drive
- Lakewoods Drive
- Mountain Lake Drive
- Nordic Lane
- Opal Trail (partial)
- Parkwoods Drive
- Pearle Road
- Pine Cone Drive
- Pine Forest Drive
- Retreat Lane
- Sly Park Road (partial)
- Starkes Grade Road (partial)
Collective Efforts

- Vegetation Management Projects
  - Fire Adapted 50
  - Utility work
  - Shaded Fuel Breaks
  - Public/Private Partnerships

- Road Brushing
- Tahoe Basin
- Fire Safe Councils
- Homeowners Associations
- Community Ordinances
- City of Placerville
- And more…
El Dorado County
Ready Together
Vegetation Management
Emergency Preparedness & Response
El Dorado County

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