



DEVELOPMENT STANDARD #2 VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

This Standard provides provisions intended to identify hazard areas and mitigate the risk to life and structures caused by a wildfire exposure and mitigate fires spreading to wildland fuels that may threaten to destroy life, overwhelm fire suppression capabilities, or result in large property loss.

The purpose of this section is to establish minimum standards for protection of life and property by reducing fuel loading and increasing the ability of a building located in any Fire Hazard Severity Zone within the District to resist the intrusion of flames or burning embers projected by a vegetation fire and contribute to a systematic reduction of conflagration losses through the use of performance and prescriptive requirements. Unless otherwise noted, Defensible Space Standards apply to all parcels within the Montecito Fire District. Vegetation management must comply with the code standards listed below as well as this Standard.

- California Public Resources Code Section 4291
- California Government Code Sections 51175 through 51189
- California Fire Code 2022 Edition Chapter 49
- California Building Code 2022 Edition Section 705A

FIRE HAZARD REDUCTION

I. FIRE HAZARD SEVERITY ZONES IN MONTECITO

Fire Hazard Severity Zone (FHSZ) maps are created by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire) to identify areas where a wildfire is more likely to occur. FHSZ maps help homeowners, landscape design and construction professionals determine which exterior wildfire-related construction and landscaping standards, found within the California Building Code apply to their residential or commercial construction projects.

Scientific models are used to geographically identify FHSZ's through an analysis of factors, such as:

- Predominant vegetation type (vegetation is the fuel for a wildfire)
- Terrain (severity of slopes)
- Fire history (past fires are good predictors of future fires)
- Weather patterns (high winds, low humidity, and high temperatures contribute to fire severity)



Please visit www.montecitofire.com/maps to determine whether your property falls in the Moderate, High or Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone.

II. VEGETATION CLEARANCE FROM STRUCTURES

DEFENSIBLE SPACE Research clearly demonstrates how defensible space significantly improves the probability of a structure surviving a fire. For the purposes of this standard, defensible space consists of three zones: 0 – 5 feet (Zone 0)*, 5 – 30 feet (Zone 1), and 30 – 100 feet (Zone 2) from all buildings or structures. A greater distance may be required on a case-by-case evaluation. Final approval of the adequacy of the defensible space shall be at the discretion of the Fire Code Official or his or her designee.

*Zone 0 applies to all parcels in the SRA, parcels designated as Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone in the LRA, and as determined by the Fire Code Official.

1. Property Owners shall maintain defensible space of 100 feet from all sides of any structure but not beyond the property line except when adverse conditions exist as referenced in paragraphs 2 and 3 below.

The level to which the Fire District will require fuel modification will depend on the flammability of the structure pursuant to building materials used, position of the structure in relation to the topography, and characteristics of the surrounding vegetation. All new vegetation shall be fire-resistant vegetation in accordance with California Fire Code Chapter 49.

Please visit www.montecitofire.com/prevention for sources of vegetation that exhibit fire-resistant properties.

New trees not classified as fire-resistant vegetation, such as conifers, palms, pepper trees and eucalyptus species, may be permitted provided the tree is planted and maintained so that the tree's drip line at maturity is a minimum 30 feet from any structure.

Defensible space shall be maintained so a wildfire burning under average weather conditions would be unlikely to ignite the structure. Further, a working structure fire would be less likely to ignite adjacent vegetation if adequate defensible space is provided.

The most aggressive clearing of vegetation occurs within Zones 0- 1, the first 30 feet around the structure. For the purposes of this section, "fuel", means



any combustible material including petroleum-based products and wildland vegetation.

- a. All mature trees shall be trimmed up off the ground 6 feet above ground level. For young/immature trees ensure limbs are trimmed well above ground level. The objective is to prevent a ground fire from spreading into the tree canopy.
 - b. All native brush and shrubs within Zones 0, 1 and 2 should be thinned and stripped of dead and/or decadent fuels.
 - c. Provide and maintain adequate spacing between the plants in order to minimize fire spread.
 - d. Remove that portion of a tree that extends to within 10 feet of the outlet to a chimney or stovepipe, including outdoor kitchen areas
 - e. Maintain any tree, shrub, or other plant that is adjacent to or overhanging a building free of dead or dying wood.
 - f. Maintain the roof of a structure free of leaves, needles, or other vegetative materials.
 - g. Remove dead trees, plants and other vegetative materials within 100 feet of any structure, driveway, road or as determined necessary by the Fire Code Official.
 - h. The Fire District may require the removal of certain existing plants or trees within 100-feet of structures. The ultimate determination of hazard is up to the Fire Code Official and may take into account other site conditions or plant characteristics beyond the species of plant.
 - i. All new vegetation must be fire-resistant. If it is necessary or desirable to re-vegetate, refer to the desirable and undesirable plant lists located on the Fire District website for guidelines and sources listed in California Fire Code Chapter 49.
2. A greater distance than that required under paragraph 1 may be required by special order from the Fire Chief or designee if additional distance is necessary due to extreme risks. Such risks could include, but are not limited to, slopes greater than 40% and heavy fuel loading.



3. Fuels reduction on adjacent properties may be required if it is determined that additional clearing is necessary to significantly reduce the risk of transmission of flame, heat, or embers sufficient to ignite the structure and there is no other feasible mitigation measure to reduce that risk. Additionally, the property owner must have done everything reasonable to meet defensible space requirements on their property. Clearance on adjacent properties shall only be conducted following written consent by the adjacent landowner. It is the responsibility of the property owner to obtain such consent.
4. The Fire Chief may authorize the removal of any vegetation on a given property that is not maintained consistent with the standards of this section. Following written notice, the Fire Chief may prescribe a procedure for the removal of such vegetation and seek reimbursement from the property owner for work that was done consistent with the procedures prescribed in the Code.

III. ROADWAY/DRIVEWAY VEGETATION CLEARANCE

1. Property owners are responsible for vegetation maintenance along private roadway / driveways and in most cases along public roads which front their property.
2. A minimum 13 ½ foot vertical clearance shall be maintained above full width of the required roadways and driveways to allow for effective response of emergency vehicles at all times.
3. Horizontal clearance of vegetation shall be maintained, at minimum, to the road right-of-way or the edge of the pavement depending on individual easements to maintain maximum traffic circulation in the event of emergency evacuation.
4. Flammable vegetation such as dead materials, annual grasses, and readily combustible fuels shall be removed for 10 feet on each side of every roadway to prevent wildfire from spreading as a result of vehicular causation (catalytic converters, sparking due to metallic/asphalt abrasion, discarded cigarettes, vehicle fires, etc.).

Exception: Single specimen trees, ornamental vegetative fuels or cultivated ground cover, such as green grass, ivy, succulents or similar plants used as ground cover, provided they do not form a means of readily transmitting fire.

5. Remove dead trees, plants and other vegetative materials within 100 feet of any driveway, road, or as determined necessary by the Fire District.



6. Excessive accumulation of waste, trash, rubbish and other belongings which prevent fire fighters from accessing the full perimeter of the structure or from gaining access to the structure shall be mitigated.

IV. VEGETATION CLEARANCE FOR VACANT PARCELS

Annual grasses/ readily combustible fuels (less than ¼ inch shaft diameter). This standard applies to all parcels, regardless of proximity to structures.

1. Parcels less than one acre in size: All grasses shall be mowed or disked to less than 3 inches in height.
2. Parcels one acre or larger in size: Create 30-foot-wide fuel breaks around and across the property dividing it into approximately one acre sections. Grasses shall be mowed or disked to less than 3 inches in height.
3. Soil disturbance shall be minimized when working on steep slopes, above waterways, and in environmentally sensitive habitat areas.
4. Dead trees, plants and other vegetative materials shall be removed from vacant parcels as determined necessary by the Fire District.

V. PHOTOVOLTAIC SYSTEMS

CLEARANCE The clearance requirements around free standing photovoltaic systems and equipment shall comply with California Fire Code, Section 1205 - Solar Photovoltaic Power Systems and the following:

1. A minimum 10-foot clearance for arrays of panels not exceeding 1,500 square feet of combined panel area.
2. A minimum 30-foot clearance for arrays of panels greater than 1,500 square feet of combined panel area.
3. Arrays shall be separated a minimum of 20 feet.



VI. WILDFIRE RISK AREA (WRA)

RESTRICTED ENTRY TO PUBLIC LANDS Fire Code Official is authorized to determine and publicly announce when an WRA shall be closed to entry and when such areas shall again be opened to entry. Entry on and occupation of an WRA, except public roadways, inhabited areas or established trails and campsites that have not been closed during such time when the WRA is closed to entry, is prohibited.

Exceptions:

1. Residents and owners of private property within a WRA and their invitees and guests going to or being on their lands.
2. Entry, in the course of duty, by peace or police officers, and other duly authorized public officers, members of a fire department and members of the Wildland Firefighting Service.

RESTRICTED ENTRY TO PRIVATE LANDS When the Fire Code Official determines that a specific area within an WRA presents a fire danger because of the density of natural growth, difficulty of terrain, proximity to structures or accessibility to the public, such areas shall be restricted or closed until conditions allow termination of such restriction or closure. Signs prohibiting entry by unauthorized persons shall be placed on every closed area. Entering and remaining within areas closed and posted is prohibited.

Exception: Owners of private or public property within closed and posted areas; their guests or invitees; authorized persons engaged in the operation and maintenance of necessary utilities such as electrical power, gas, telephone, water and sewer; and local, state and federal public officers and their authorized agents acting in the course of duty.

VII. ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE HABITAT (ESH)

Selective fuel management shall be practiced to minimize the removal or clearance of dead and/or decadent native riparian vegetation to the extent feasible. Maintain native vegetation to the maximum extent possible, consistent with fuel modification requirements. It is important to make efforts to minimize soil disturbance.

For clarification or advice on clearing in sensitive areas, please contact County of Santa Barbara Planning and Development.