



# Central County Fire Department

Serving the communities of Burlingame, Hillsborough, and Millbrae

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS for CCFDs Proposed Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) program for the Town of Hillsborough:**

**If you have more questions please contact CCFD @ 650.558.7600 and ask for  
the Fire Prevention Division**

*Q: What is Wildland Urban Interface (WUI)?*

A: The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) defines the WUI as the "locations in which the [authority having jurisdiction] determines that topographical features, vegetation fuel types, local weather conditions, and prevailing winds result in the potential for ignition of the structures within the area from flames and firebrands of a wildland fire."

*Q: How will I know if these regulations will apply to my property?*

A: Individuals may go to Hillsborough Town website to view the Wildland Urban Interface Area maps. The map shows individual parcels which you can determine if your property is located in a WUI Area. For privacy reasons we do not post specific addresses however you can also call CCFD and ask for Fire Prevention to assist you in determining if you live in the affected areas.

*Q: How were the Wildland Urban Interface Areas determined or created?*

A: In 2010, the Town of Hillsborough was required to report to the Cal Fire areas within the Town which would be deemed Fire Hazard Severity Zones. Along with the fire severity areas designated by the State of California's Fire and Resource Assessment Program (FRAP) Hillsborough indicated parcels adjacent to Town Open Space as Wildland Urban Interface Areas.

Central County Fire Department will be performing a complete assessment of the Town by contracting with an experienced vendor to determine areas most at risk. This is done by taking into consideration fuels, slopes, distance dense vegetation, access, water, and construction. The assessment will mirror Cal Fire's determination of fire hazard severity zones. Those areas in the Town which get classified as Very High or High Fire Hazard Severity Zones will be designated as Wildland Urban Interface Areas.

*Q: My property is in the WUI Area, what are my responsibilities as property owner?*



- A: If you are located with in a WUI Area, between the months of April 1<sup>st</sup> and June 30<sup>th</sup> each year you would be required to provide for the removal of all combustible vegetation from your property, limb up trees, and remove any dead vegetation. Specific criteria will be provided by CCFD
- Q: *My property is more than 5 acres, am I required to perform vegetation management to my entire property?*
- A: No, properties greater than 5 acres only need to provide vegetation management to the outer 30-foot perimeter of the property. Additionally, defensible space is still required to be provided within 100 feet of any structures.
- Q: *Are there any exceptions to having to provide annual vegetation management to my property?*
- A: Yes, if you have a fire resistive landscape or a fire protection plan for your property that is registered with the Central County Fire Department.
- Q: *How do I get a fire protection plan for my property?*
- A: Design criteria and templates are available from the CCFD website at [www.ccfid.org](http://www.ccfid.org). Additionally, CCFD can meet with your landscaper or landscape architect to go over the creation of a fire protection plan for your property?
- Q: *I've created a defensible space on my property, but I'm concerned that my neighbor has not done enough and I'm afraid a fire on their property may threaten my property or spread to my property. What can I do?*
- A: Please contact CCFDs Fire Prevention Division. We can determine what requirements are necessary for compliance and assist with any required compliance.
- Q: *I'm located in a WUI Area and I'm planning on remodeling my house, how does this affect my remodel?*
- A: Have your designer plan on having all new exterior materials be inherently fire resistive. When your exterior surface modification exceeds 25% of the original structure surface the entire structure will be treated as brand new requiring all materials including existing materials be upgraded to inherently fire resistive products.



*Q: Am I required to have a fire resistive landscape?*

A: If you live within the WUI Area and you do any work exceeding 25% of the original structure surface then you will be required to submit a fire resistive landscape for approval through CCFD. Additionally, if you have a fire resistive landscape and maintain your landscape you will be exempt from meeting the requirements for annual property defensible space clearing.

*Q: What is a Fire Protection Plan?*

A: It describes ways to minimize and mitigate the fire problems created by the project or development, with purpose of reducing impact on the community's fire protection delivery system. It usually includes a vegetation management plan.

*Q: What is a Vegetation Management Plan?*

A: It is a plan to a specific property describes all actions that will be taken to prevent a fire from being carried toward or away from the building on the property. CCFD can assist property owners in developing their plan.

*Q: My property is fewer than 5 acres, but I have always maintained proper defensible space. Will I be required to clear the remainder of the property?*

A: Yes, the WUI Ordinance is intended to take a community safety approach and recognize that it is a community responsibility to protect your home as well as your neighbor's home.

*Q: Is a maintained defensible space considered fire resistive landscaping?*

A: It is not, fire resistive landscaping is the use of verified plants that are known to be inherently fire resistive in nature. Landscapes will not extend to the entire property rather than just within 100 foot of the property structure.

*Q: What are the consequences if I don't comply to these requests?*

A: For properties that do not comply with the WUI Ordinance, CCFD will have codified support to enforce the ordinance. Consequences for not complying after an enforcement letter has been sent would be an abatement notice and order for any hazards as well as associated fees. This would be in extenuating circumstances of non-compliance. CCFD's goal is to work with residents to understand why defensible space it is important to the community as a whole.



*Q: Do you have a list of contractors I could reach out to have this done each year?*

A: As this is a brand-new ordinance, CCFD does not have a list of approved contractors to perform this work at this time. CCFD will develop performance standards to begin qualifying contractors to perform work in order to meet WUI ordinance requirements when properties are non-compliant.

*Q: What if I own a vacant lot, what are my requirements?*

A: See the requirements for Vacant lots in the Municipal Code. Vegetation management will be required on all parcels regardless of structures.

*Q: I am interested in removing some trees from my property to satisfy these requirements. Do I need a permit or need to contact anyone from the Town of Hillsborough before doing so?*

A: Depending on the height and circumference, a permit is required through the Town of Hillsborough Building Division. Approval may be necessary by the Architecture and Design Review Board (ADRB).

*Q: Am I required to have a fire resistive landscape?*

A: No, you may create a fire protection plan. If you choose to install fire resistive landscaping, a landscape plan must be submitted through the Hillsborough Community Development Department for approval by the Fire Department. Fire resistance plant options are listed on the CCFD website at [www.ccfid.org](http://www.ccfid.org).

*Q: Will the Fire Department inspect my property without my knowledge or when no one is home?*

A: Reasonable efforts to contact the property owner will be made before entering private property.

*Q: How can I request for my property to be excluded from this program?*

A: Because the community is connected all properties within The Town of Hillsborough are evaluated to determine their level of risk. Properties determined to be within high or very high fire severity zones are included. If your property is within either of these zones, it is required to comply with this code.



*Q: If I meet all the requirements with the Town's WUI Ordinance regarding vegetation management and my house was remodeled to include inherently fire resistive components throughout the exterior of my house, can I receive credits to my homeowners' insurance policy?*

A: The wildfire-risk tools that insurers use is different with each insurer. CCFD does not make any determination of insurability. At this time insurers have not indicated whether or not any vegetation management or defensible space efforts will impact fire insurance availability.

*Q: Will the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone in Local Responsibility Area affect the cost and availability of fire insurance?*

A: Insurance rates are determined by a variety of factors, including Fire Risk. Fire Risk is different from Fire Hazard. Fire Hazard is the focus of the Fire Hazard Severity Zone (FHSZ) maps, not Fire Risk. Fire Hazard is based on factors such as fuel (material that can burn), slope and fire weather. Fire Risk considers the potential for damage based on factors such as the ability of a fire to ignite the structure, the flammability of the construction material, and mitigation measures that reduce the risk. These mitigation measures include defensible space, building design, ignition resistant building materials, and ignition resistant construction techniques.

It is not possible to state that insurers will ignore the limitations of the focus of FHSZ maps. However, to respond to such issues, the California Department of Insurance and CAL FIRE have established a partnership and joint commitment to protecting Californians from fire losses. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the Insurance Commissioner and the Director of CAL FIRE, October 2007 to mutually promote awareness and collaboration among fire officials, the insurance industry, and the public to prevent and mitigate fire losses.

*Q: How are Fire Hazard Severity Zones determined in local responsibility area?*

A: CCFD is currently at work for an updated, independent fire hazard assessment. At this time CCFD and the Town use CAL FIRE's hazard mapping which is an extension of the state responsibility area FHSZ model as the basis for evaluating fire hazard in local responsibility area. The local responsibility area hazard rating reflects flame and ember intrusion from adjacent wildlands and from flammable vegetation in the urban area. Scientists at the U. C. Berkeley Center for Fire



Research and Outreach provided an urban fuels model that was incorporated in the hazard rating.

*Q: What can be done to reduce buildings loss from wildfire?*

**A:** Years of experience by CCFD and others have led to a statutory strategy for reducing the chance of building loss or damage. It is a two-pronged approach: **1)** defensible space – reduce flammable material around homes to keep direct flames and heat away from the side of the building. (The law already requires property owners to create 100 feet of defensible space around buildings); **2)** exterior wildfire exposure protection - construct buildings so that they have less chance of catching fire from burning embers. We have learned that we must make changes to the surrounding property and to the buildings themselves.

We will provide for more FAQ's as we move forward with input from the community and Council.