



DRAFTING AND IMPLEMENTING ZONE 0

Creating a wildfire safety barrier around California homes.
Protecting people, neighborhoods, and communities.

J. Lopez

California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, 9.17.25

OVERVIEW

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2 | RULE SPECIFICS

3 | NEXT STEPS



ZONE 0
0-5 FEET

ZONE 0 EXPLAINED

Following catastrophic wind-driven fires in 2017 and 2018, the Legislature directed the California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection to create a third zone of defensible space through AB 3074 (2020). The zone has been termed **Zone 0** and is a defensible space zone within the **first five feet** of a home or building.

It is considered the most important area to keep clear of combustible items such as mulch and woody plants to reduce the risk of structure ignition during an ember-driven wildfire.

WHERE WILL ZONE 0 APPLY?

State Responsibility Area (SRA)

-Estimated 1.25 million structures

Local Responsibility Area (LRA)

Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (VHFHSZ)

-Estimated 870,000 structures

Estimate: 17% of all structures statewide



COMBUSTIBLE ITEMS IN ZONE 0

Combustible items typically found in Zone 0 include:

- Mulch
- Firewood
- Trashcans
- Window boxes
- Lawns, shrubs, other plants
- Trees
- Fences and gates
- Outbuildings



WHEN WILL REGULATIONS TAKE EFFECT?

- Executive Order N-18-25: *The Board shall complete the rulemaking process **by the end of 2025.***
- Simultaneously working on a guidance document, as described in Public Resources Code § 4291(e). Public outreach and information campaigns to follow concurrently.
- When the regulations are in effect and the guidance document is updated, regulations will apply **immediately for new construction and in 3 years later for existing buildings and structures.**



...YEARS OF PARTNERSHIP & RESEARCH...



PRE-RULEMAKING PHASE IN 2025

- February Executive Order
- Zone 0 Committee established
- Public workshops and public comment opportunities every month since March 2025
- Revised draft rule text posted August 18
- Reflects public comment, need for flexibility, recognizes local variations in local conditions



ZONE 0 COMMITTEE MISSION + GOALS



Convene stakeholders, listen to communities, and propose regulations for full Board consideration and adoption that will create a safe, less-fire prone environment.



This requires considering regional variations around the state and balancing numerous factors, including shade, habitat and water use associated with residential landscaping.



RECENT WORK

- Gathering the **latest science** on Zone 0
- Incorporating** additional perspectives/input
- Identifying **financial assistance** through Climate Bond and other sources
- Receiving updates** on Safer From Wildfires recommendations and Department of Insurance Framework for Sustainable Insurance
- Working with economic consultants** to complete economic assessment



BREAKING DOWN THE LATEST RULE LANGUAGE

- Zone 0 applies to the area within 5 feet of each building, or to the property line, whichever comes first.
- Zone 1 is modified to apply from 5 to 30 feet (instead of 0-30 feet) or to the property line, whichever comes first.
- No landscaping materials that are likely to be ignited by embers. There is a plotted plant exception
- Single Specimen* **trees allowed** if well-pruned and maintained (no dead or dying branches) to manage fuels and fuel ladders
- Gates and fences directly attached to buildings cannot be combustible.
- CAL FIRE may allow existing buildings to comply in stages to address cost issues.
- ADU construction on an adjacent property will not result in a landowner being deemed out of compliance.



BREAKING DOWN THE LATEST RULE LANGUAGE CONTD.

-In LRA, the authority having jurisdiction may choose to develop alternate practices for Zone 0 compliance that take into consideration location variation – in lot sizes, local fire hazards, plant ecology, and local ordinances.

MYTH VS. FACT

MYTH: The proposed regulation will force residents to take out ALL vegetation within 30 feet of their home.

FACT: The regulation applies only to the first five feet around a home or structure. Trees are allowed within the first five feet (Zone 0) if they are pruned and maintained appropriately. Existing regulation requires that trees 5-30 feet from a building must be kept free of dead or dying branches.



MYTH VS. FACT

MYTH: A clear body of peer-reviewed science shows trees and vegetation protect homes from embers.

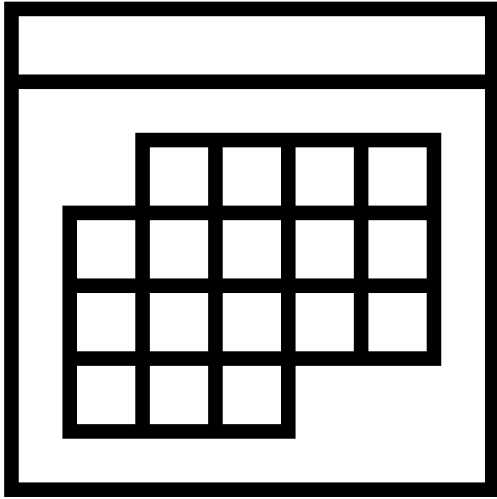
FACT: Anecdotal information has been cited to suggest vegetation is protective. There is no conclusive science to date that supports that conclusion.

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MYTH: Homeowners will face fines of \$500 a day if they are not in compliance with Zone 0.

FACT: There is a three-year phase in for compliance. The State is focused on education, outreach and assistance.





TIMELINE + NEXT STEPS

-**SEPTEMBER 2025:** Zone 0 Committee in LA for public meeting (9.18) and Sacramento (9.22)

-**SEPT/OCT 2025:** Additional revisions to draft rule text considered. Committee forwards rule text to full Board.

-**NOVEMBER 2025:** Full Board considers rule text and rule package. Vote to initiate formal rulemaking process.

-**NOV/DEC 2025:** Formal rulemaking comment period. Public hearing. Response to comments. Revise regulations as necessary.

-**JANUARY 2026:** Board considers rulemaking process. Completes formal rulemaking process.

