

Below is draft rule text that the Zone 0 Regulation Advisory Committee will discuss at a public workshop on Thursday September 18, 2025. The Board invites comments on all provisions of the draft rule text.

Board of Forestry and Fire Protection

Defensible Space Zone 0

Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations

Division 1.5, Chapter 7,

Subchapter 3 Article 3

§ 1299.01. Purpose.

The intent of this regulation is to provide guidance for implementation of Public Resources Code Section 4291 to improve safety for fire fighters defending a home as well as increase the survivability of a “Building or Structure” as defined, ~~that exists in grass, brush, and forest covered lands~~ within the designated State Responsibility Area (SRA) of California.

Note: Authority cited: Sections 4290 and 4291, Public Resources Code. Reference: Section 4291, Public Resources Code.

§ 1299.02. Definitions.

The following definitions apply to this article:

(a) Attached: Directly connected or affixed to a Building or Structure.

(b) Building or Structure. Anything constructed that is designed or intended for support, enclosure, shelter, or protection of persons, animals, or property, having a permanent

1 roof that is supported by walls or posts that connect to, or rest on the ground. A Building
2 or Structure, for the purpose of an ember-resistant zone, includes an attached deck.

3 (c) Combustible: Vegetative, wood, or petroleum-based materials that are likely to ignite
4 and transmit flames.

5 (ad) Defensible space. The buffer that landowners are required to create on their
6 property between a “Building or Structure” and the plants, brush and trees or other
7 items surrounding the “Building or Structure” that could ignite in the event of a fire.

8 (e) Existing Building or Structure. An Existing Building or Structure is a Building or
9 Structure other than a New Building or Structure.

10 (f) New Building or Structure. A New Building or Structure is a Building or Structure that
11 did not exist prior to the effective date of the regulation that added this subsection.

12 (g) Outbuilding. Buildings or Structures that are less than one hundred-twenty (120)
13 square feet in size and not used for human habitation. For purposes of this Section, an
14 “Outbuilding” is not a “Building or Structure” as defined in subsection (b) above.

15
16 Note: Authority cited: Sections 4290 and 4291, Public Resources Code. Reference:
17 Section 4291, Public Resources Code; and Sections 18908 and 18917, Health and
18 Safety Code.

19
20 § 1299.03. Requirements.

21 Defensible space is required to be maintained at all times, ~~whenever flammable~~
22 ~~vegetative conditions exist.~~

23 (a) One hundred feet (100 ft.) of defensible space clearance shall be maintained in two
24 three distinct “Zzones” as follows: Zone 0 is the area within five feet (5 ft.) around each
25 Building or Structure or to the property line, whichever comes first. “Zone 1” extends

1 from five (5ft.) to thirty feet (30 ft.) out from each “Building or Structure,” or to the
2 property line, whichever comes first; “Zone 2” extends from thirty feet (30 ft.) to one
3 hundred feet (100 ft.) from each “Building or Structure,” but not beyond the property line.
4 The vegetation treatment requirements for Zone 0 are more restrictive than for Zone 1;
5 the requirements for Zone 1 are more restrictive than for Zone 2; as provided in this
6 section (a) and (b) below. The Department of Forestry and Fire Protection's “Property
7 Inspection Guide, 2000 version, April 2000,” provides additional guidance on vegetation
8 treatment within Zone 1 and Zone 2, but is not mandatory and is not intended as a
9 substitute for these regulations.

10 (b) Zone 0 Requirements:

11 (1) No landscaping materials that are likely to be ignited by embers are permitted
12 within Zone 0. This includes, but is not limited to grass, ornamental or native
13 plants, shrubs, fallen leaves and tree needles, weeds, and combustible mulches
14 including bark and woodchips.

15 (A) Exception: Plants in pots are allowable if they are in areas that are not
16 directly beneath, above, or in front of a window, glass door, or vent; are
17 kept in an unaffixed, not combustible pot or container that is no larger than
18 five (5) gallon capacity; and set apart by one and a half (1.5) times the
19 height of the plant or twelve inches (12”), whichever is greater, from the
20 structure and each other. These plants shall be no greater than 18 inches
21 in height. Dead or dying material on the plants shall be removed.

22 (2) Trees within Zone 0 shall be maintained so that there are no dead or dying
23 branches. All live tree branches shall be maintained five feet (5') above the
24 adjacent Building or Structure’s roof, ten feet (10') away from chimneys and

1 stovepipe outlets, and five feet (5') away from the sides of any Building or
2 Structure.

3 (B) Exception: this subdivision does not apply to single specimens of trees
4 ~~or other vegetation~~ that are well-pruned and maintained so as to
5 effectively manage fuels and fuel ladders, as provided in Public Resources
6 Code Section 4291.

7
8 (3) No ~~Combustible~~ items that are likely to be ignited by embers are permitted
9 within Zone 0, ~~including but not limited to combustible boards, timbers, firewood,~~
10 ~~Combustible petroleum-based products, window boxes, and trellises.~~ The roof
11 and rain gutters of a Building or Structure shall be kept clear of leaves and
12 needles. The area under decks, balconies, and stairs shall be kept free from
13 vegetative material and combustible items.

14 (4) Combustible gates shall not be directly adjacent to or attached to a Building
15 or Structure.

16 (5) Fences that are directly attached to a Building or Structure shall have a five
17 foot (5 ft) non-combustible span at the point of attachment. After the effective
18 date of this regulation, no new ~~sections of~~ Combustible fences are permitted
19 within five feet (5 ft) of a Building or Structure including an attached deck.

20 (6) Outbuildings are not permitted in Zone 0.

21 (7) The requirements for Zone 0 shall take effect for New Buildings or Structures
22 upon the date that the guidance document, as described in PRC § 4291(e), is
23 updated and for existing Buildings or Structures three years thereafter. Upon
24 updating the guidance document, the Board shall post it on its website.

1 (8) For existing structures, the Department may allow work in stages to support
2 implementation of Zone 0 and address the costs of compliance.

3 (9) For the purposes of compliance with Zone 0 requirements, the addition of an
4 Accessory Dwelling Unit as defined in Gov Code section 66313 on a neighboring
5 property within five feet of the property line shall not result in a landowner being
6 deemed out of compliance.]

7
8 (a~~c~~) Zone 1 Requirements:

9 (1) Remove all dead or dying grass, plants, shrubs, trees, branches, leaves,
10 weeds, and pine needles from the Zone whether such vegetation occurs in yard
11 areas around the "Building or Structure," ~~on the roof or rain gutters of the~~
12 ~~"Building or Structure,"~~ or any other location within the Zone.

13 ~~(2) Remove dead tree or shrub branches that overhang roofs, below or adjacent~~
14 ~~to windows, or which are adjacent to wall surfaces, and keep all branches a~~
15 ~~minimum of ten feet (10 ft.) away from chimney and stovepipe outlets.~~

16 ~~(3) Relocate exposed firewood piles~~ into Zone 2 or outside of the defensible
17 space for a Building or Structure ~~outside of Zone 1~~ unless they are completely
18 enclosed in a fire-resistant material.

19 ~~(4) Remove flammable vegetation and items that could catch fire which are~~
20 ~~adjacent to or under combustible decks, balconies and stairs.~~

21 (b~~d~~) Zone 2 Requirements:

22 (1) In this zone, create horizontal and vertical spacing among shrubs and trees
23 using the "Fuel Separation" method, the "Continuous Tree Canopy" method, or a
24 combination of both to achieve defensible space clearance requirements. Further
25 guidance regarding these methods is contained in the State Board of Forestry

1 and Fire Protection's, "General Guidelines for Creating Defensible Space,
2 February 8, 2006," incorporated herein by reference, and the "Property
3 Inspection Guide" referenced elsewhere in this regulation.

4 (2) In both the Fuel Separation and Continuous Tree Canopy methods the
5 following standards apply:

6 (A) Dead and dying woody surface fuels and aerial fuels shall be removed.

7 Loose surface litter, normally consisting of fallen leaves or needles, twigs,
8 bark, cones, and small branches, shall be permitted to a maximum depth
9 of three inches (3 in.).

10 (B) Cut annual grasses and forbs down to a maximum height of four
11 inches (4 in.).

12 (C) All exposed wood piles must have a minimum of ten feet (10 ft.) of
13 clearance, down to bare mineral soil, in all directions.

14 (~~ee~~) For both Zones 1 and 2:

15 (1) "Outbuildings" and Liquid Propane Gas (LPG) storage tanks shall have the
16 following minimum clearance: ten feet (10 ft.) of clearance to bare mineral soil
17 and no flammable vegetation for an additional ten feet (10 ft.) around their
18 exterior.

19 (2) Protect water quality. Do not clear vegetation to bare mineral soil and avoid
20 the use of heavy equipment in and around streams and seasonal
21 drainages. Vegetation removal can cause soil erosion, especially on steep
22 slopes. Keep soil disturbance to a minimum on steep slopes.

Note: Authority cited: Sections 4290 and 4291, Public Resources Code. Reference:
Section 4291, Public Resources Code; and Sections 18908 and 18917, Health and
Safety Code.

§ 1299.05. Alternative Methods.

The provisions of these regulations are not intended to exclude alternative methods not
specifically prescribed by these regulations. A fire expert designated by the Director
may approve alternative practices which provide for the same practical effects as those
stated in these regulations within the SRA.

Within the LRA, the authority having jurisdiction may choose to develop alternative
practices for Zone 0 compliance that take into account local variations such as lot sizes,
structure density, Chapter 7A and / or Wildland Urban Interface Code building materials,
local fire hazards, geography, and plant ecology and maintenance, as well as
compliance with local ordinances. The alternative practices shall be supported with a
finding by the authority having jurisdiction that the alternative practices provide for
substantially similar practical effects as those stated in these regulations.]

~~Within the LRA the authority having jurisdiction may choose to develop alternative
practices for Zone 0 compliance that take into account local variation, including
differences in geography, geology, ecology, city and county ordinances, and
architecture.~~

Note: Authority cited: Sections 4290 and 4291, Public Resources Code. Reference:
Sections 4291 and 4291.3, Public Resources Code.