

Brush Clearance Annual Notice

Frequently Asked Questions

Why am I receiving this notice?

Your property is located within a fire hazard severity zone identified by The Department of Forestry and Fire Protection CAL FIRE [FHSZ Viewer \(ca.gov\)](#) or has been historically identified with a potential fire hazard by the Los Angeles County Fire Department.

What are the Very High, High and Moderate Fire Hazard Severity Zones, and who determines these zones?

Fire hazard severity zones indicate the potential fire hazard on an area of land, based on several factors, including vegetation, topography, worst case weather conditions, fire history, predicted flame lengths, burn probability and ember cast. CAL FIRE is mandated to classify all lands within the state by California Public Resources Code 4201-4204.

Where does the Fire Department get the authority to conduct defensible space inspections?

The California Public Resources Code 4291 (PRC 4291) defines requirements for inspections for, “A person who owns, leases, controls, operates, or maintains a building or structure in, upon, or adjoining a mountainous area, forest-covered lands, shrub-covered lands, grass-covered lands, or land that is covered with flammable material, shall at all times do all of the following:”

There is no brush around my property, why am I being inspected?

If your property is located within a designated fire hazard severity zone, an inspection is required. Due to ember cast, this includes structures inside developments without open land (native vegetation) immediately adjacent to the structure.

Why is this the first time I am receiving this notice?

Available GIS technology and mapping programs allow the fire department to identify all parcels within fire hazard severity zones. Prior to integrating GIS technology within the inspection program, structures were identified through fire history and visual identification. The new technology allows greater accuracy and some structures have been identified for the first time.

When will my property be inspected?

Depending on the property's location, inspections will start in April for desert areas, May 1 for inland areas, and June 1 for coastal areas.

Do I need to be home when the inspection is conducted?

You do not have to be home, but inspectors typically knock on the front door and announce themselves prior to inspecting when there is no answer.

Will the fire department make an appointment with me to inspect my property.

If you would like an appointment, please call your local fire station to set up a convenient time. If you missed the inspection, received a violation and would like additional information, there will be a phone number to call the local station at the top of the inspection form in the 'Contact Number' box.

If I have locked gates, how will the fire department complete the inspection?

The inspector will only use unlocked gates and areas with reasonable access. If there are locked gates and the inspector must see behind them to complete the inspection, the inspector may come back later when someone is home or try to call or email the occupant to gain entry. If no contact was possible, the fire department may write an inspection warrant to gain entry and confirm defensible space compliance.

Can I call someone if I need clarity on requirements?

Yes, prior to your inspection, please call the Brush Clearance Unit at (626) 969-2375. After your inspection, please call the phone number listed on your inspection report.

Will I receive a report showing if my property is in compliance?

Yes, all property owners will receive an inspection report showing either 'In Compliance' or the violations that need to be corrected.

How much time will I have to make corrections?

Owners have a minimum of 30 days to complete corrections.

Do I need to remove trees?

Most likely, the answer is no, but all trees should be free of dead wood and limbed up to 6' or 1/3 the tree's height.

Why is there an inspection fee?

Los Angeles County Agricultural Commission/Weights & Measures has been charging an inspection fee since 1989. The Auditor/Controller (A/C) reviewed, and the Board of Supervisors approved the fire department's inspection fee on December 7, 2021. The fee is required to make the brush inspection program cost neutral. The A/C approved the inspection fee. The inspection fee was \$50 in 2022, \$100 in 2023 and will be \$151 in 2024.

How will I be billed for the inspection fee?

The inspection fee will be assessed annually and show up on the November property tax bill. There is a one-year delay from the inspection to seeing the assessment on your property tax bill. (Example: if an inspection is conducted in June 2023, the property tax assessment will arrive November 2024).

What is the purpose of the 'protest' hearing taking place on February 15th in Arcadia and February 16th in Lancaster?

The primary purpose of the protest hearing is to allow an owner to dispute whether the property is in a fire hazard severity zone and should therefore receive an inspection. Owners may also discuss defensible space requirements if desired.

Have there been State law changes impacting requirements to ensure defensible space?

Yes. The State is very concerned with saving lives and property and has reviewed and verified fire science that indicates structure loss can be reduced when homeowners harden their home and reduce vegetation closest to the home. The legislature approved two critical laws to address structure loss: [AB 3074](#) and [AB 38](#).

What is Assembly Bill 3074 (AB 3074)?

Zone 0 – the ember resistant zone. This law requires a 5' ember resistant zone around all structures in a fire hazard severity zone. bit.ly/AB3074

When does AB 3074 take effect?

AB 3074 became law on January 1, 2021, but will not be enforced until the State approves vegetation clearance requirements; this is expected in the fall of 2023. Full enforcement on existing structures will not be required until one year after the State approves final requirements. This is expected for inspections that will occur in 2024. Full enforcement on new construction will take effect immediately upon approval of final clearance requirements.

Do I need to remove all plants within the first 5' of my structure(s)?

After the State approves final Zone 0 requirements, it is expected that very few plants will be allowed within the first 5' of a structure, but some plants, like large trees, can be maintained so removal is not necessary. bit.ly/DefensibleSpaceZones

How can I maintain and retain a tree within Zone 0?

Trees with large trunks must have all lower limbs removed within the first 5' of the structure. Think of a 5' clear cylinder parallel to the wall. All tree canopies must be removed for the first 10' above the roof. This is to minimize leaf litter collecting on the roof.

What is Assembly Bill 38 (AB 38)?

AB 38 requires all real estate sellers with structures in a FHSZ to ensure compliance with defensible space requirements. bit.ly/AB-38Inspections

When does AB 38 take effect?

The requirement for real estate defensible space compliance inspections took effect on July 1, 2021.

Link to LA County Fire – Fire Hazard Reduction Programs:

<https://fire.lacounty.gov/fire-hazard-reduction-programs/>