

Date of Hearing: April 23, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Rhodesia Ransom, Chair

AB 2517 (Calderon) – As Amended April 8, 2026

SUBJECT: Fire safety: fire hazard severity zones

SUMMARY: Establishes a process for public engagement for the State Fire Marshal's (SFM) development of fire hazard severity zone (FHSZ) maps. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires the SFM, no fewer than 180 days before finalizing the FHSZ designations, to do all of the following:
 - a) Post draft maps of preliminary designations on its public internet website to ensure the preliminary designations are available for stakeholder review and comment.
 - b) Post the data inputs, model, and methodology used to develop the preliminary designations on its public internet website.
 - c) Provide at least one workshop on the draft maps for stakeholder participation, as specified.
 - d) Host a 30-day public comment period for interested stakeholders to provide written comment on the draft maps and respond to, within 30 days of the end of the public comment period, as specified, all written comments received from local agencies regarding land use and zoning matters that address the accuracy of the data used by the State Fire Marshal for the preliminary designation.
 - e) Coordinate with other state agencies to educate their constituencies on mitigation activities, fire insurance, and other related maps and models related to the preliminary designations
- 2) Defines stakeholder to mean fire departments, fire safe councils, and local agencies.
- 3) Authorizes a local agency to increase the level of fire hazard severity applicable to a parcel in its jurisdiction if a parcel contains two or more designations, so that the higher level of fire hazard severity would apply to the entire parcel.
- 4) Authorizes a local agency to include documentation of existing wildfire mitigation efforts or programs implemented locally within the FHSZs in its jurisdiction.
- 5) Requires the SFM to publish, within 60 days, the adopted local ordinances designating FHSZs on its internet website to ensure they are publicly available.
- 6) Requires, on or before January 1, 2030, and every five years thereafter, the SFM to review the local responsibility areas (LRA) lands, including areas identified as moderate, high, and very high fire FHSZs, and, as necessary, recommend changes. Requires review of LRA lands to coincide with the review of SRA lands every five years.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the State Fire Marshal (SFM) as a component of the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) to foster, promote, and develop ways and means of protecting life and property against fire and panic. (Health & Safety Code Section 13100 – 13100.1)
- 2) Requires the SFM to identify areas in the state as moderate, high, and very high fire hazard severity zones based on consistent statewide criteria and based on the severity of fire hazard that is expected to prevail in those areas. (Government Code Section 51178 & Public Resources Code Section 4202)
- 3) Establishes the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection (Board) to determine, establish, and maintain an adequate forest policy for the state, and protect all wildland forest resources in California that are not under federal jurisdiction. (Public Resources Code Section 740)
- 4) Requires the Board to classify all lands within the state, without regard to any classification of lands made by or for any federal agency or purpose, for the purpose of determining areas in which the financial responsibility of preventing and suppressing fires is primarily the responsibility of the state, commonly referred to as the “State Responsibility Area.” (Public Resources Code Section 4125 (a))
- 5) Provides that the following areas are not to be included in the State Responsibility Area:
 - a) Lands owned or controlled by the federal government or any agency of the federal government; and
 - b) Lands within the exterior boundaries of any city, except a city and county with a population of less than 25,000 if, at the time the city and county government is established, the county contains no municipal corporations, typically referred to as a local responsibility area. (Public Resources Code Section 4127)
- 6) Requires the SFM, by regulation, to designate FHSZs and assign to each zone a rating reflecting the degree of severity of fire hazard that is expected to prevail in the zone. Provides that no designation of a zone and assignment of a rating shall be adopted by the SFM until the proposed regulation has been transmitted to the board of supervisors of the county in which the zone is located at least 45 days before the adoption of the proposed regulation and a public hearing has been held in that county during that 45-day period. (Public Resources Code Section 4203)
- 7) Requires the SFM to periodically review zones designated and rated pursuant to current law and, as necessary, revise FHSZs or their ratings or repeal the designation of FHSZs. (Public Resources Code Section 4204)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown. A fiscal committee has not analyzed this bill.

COMMENTS:

Author Statement: “Wildfires are an increasing reality for communities across California, and the way we plan for that risk matters. When the state updates fire hazard severity zone maps, local governments and residents deserve a clear understanding of what those changes mean and a chance to share their input. Assembly Bill 2517 helps make this process more transparent by requiring advance notice, public workshops, and opportunities for communities to provide

feedback before maps are finalized. By improving communication and collaboration, we can help ensure communities are better informed and better prepared for wildfire risk.”

Equity Statement: “This bill may have a positive equity impact by increasing transparency and public participation in the fire hazard severity zone designation process. By requiring advance notice, public workshops, and opportunities for public comment, the bill helps ensure that local governments, residents, and community organizations have better access to information and the ability to provide input on decisions that affect wildfire risk and planning. These opportunities may be especially important for rural and under-resourced communities that are often more vulnerable to wildfire impacts but have fewer resources to engage in state processes.”

Wildfires: Wildfires are a severe and growing threat to lives, property, and infrastructure in California. The confluence of a changing climate, urbanization, and constraints on forest management increases the urgency to address this threat. According to data from CAL FIRE, 18 of California’s 20 most destructive fires have occurred in the past decade.¹ Collectively, these fires have resulted in 231 deaths and the loss of 66,810 structures (homes, outbuildings, and commercial properties). While fewer wildfires threatened California in 2023 due to the increased number of weather events and atmospheric rivers, the vegetative growth from the significant rainfall contributed to devastating wildfires in 2024 and 2025. In 2024, the Park Fire became the fourth-largest fire in California’s history. Despite aggressive initial attack suppression efforts, the fire rapidly expanded, ultimately consuming 429,603 acres across Butte and Tehama counties. The Park Fire led to the destruction of 713 structures and damage to 57 others, prompting widespread evacuations and the temporary closure of Lassen Volcanic National Park. In January 2025, Los Angeles County experienced the second and third most destructive fires in California history: the Palisades Fire and Eaton Fire. The University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) estimated the fires’ total property and capital losses could range between \$76 billion and \$131 billion, with insured losses estimated up to \$45 billion. At its height, the fires placed an estimated 331,335 people on an evacuation advisory, with nearly 192,000 residents facing mandatory evacuation and roughly 140,000 subject to warnings. The Eaton Fire resulted in 9,413 buildings being destroyed, 1,074 structures damaged, and 19 confirmed civilian fatalities. The Palisades Fire resulted in 6,833 structures destroyed, 973 structures damaged, and 12 confirmed civilian fatalities. The blazes burned a combined 37,728 acres and leveled entire communities in the Pacific Palisades and Altadena neighborhoods of LA County.

Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZ): As referenced above, Public Resource Code 4202 requires the SFM to classify lands within state responsibility areas into fire hazard severity zones. Each zone shall embrace relatively homogeneous lands and shall be based on fuel loading, slope, fire weather, and other relevant factors present, including areas where winds have been identified by the department as a major cause of wildfire spread. Under Government Code 51178, the SFM is required to identify areas in the state as moderate, high, and very high fire hazard severity zones based on consistent statewide criteria and based on the severity of fire hazard that is expected to prevail in those areas. Moderate, high, and very high fire hazard severity zones shall be based on fuel loading, slope, fire weather, and other relevant factors including areas where winds have been identified by the SFM as a major cause of wildfire spread.

¹ Statistics, CAL FIRE <https://www.fire.ca.gov/our-impact/statistics>

Once the SFM finalizes the FHSZ designation, the SFM sends the FHSZ maps, along with a model ordinance, to the local agency's governing body for adoption. Local agencies are statutorily required to adopt an ordinance designating their FHSZs within 120 days from receiving the maps. The local agency may increase the severity level identified by the SFM or add additional areas within their jurisdiction, but they cannot reduce the severity level set by the SFM.

How are FHSZs determined?: According to CAL FIRE, "the best available science and data were used to develop and field test a model that now serves as the basis of zone assignments. The model evaluated the probability of the area burning and potential fire behavior in the area. Many factors were included such as fire history, vegetation, flame length, blowing embers, proximity to wildland, terrain, and weather."

Arguments in Support: According to the League of Cities, the American Planning Association, California State Association of Counties, and others, "The local responsibility area (LRA) FHSZ designations are only required to be periodically re-reviewed every five years and existing statute does not require comprehensive updates to the designations. Prior to the most recent release in 2025, the LRA FHSZ maps had not been updated over the past 15 years. Important concerns were raised last year when the maps were updated, including the accuracy of land use information, including split parcels with multiple designations and the classification of developed areas such as parking lots and bodies of water being designated as very high fire hazard severity zones. These issues create challenges for local jurisdictions who are required to adopt these maps by ordinance and host public comment locally without the ability to respond to the public concerns regarding the model and data."

They continue, "AB 2517 would address these concerns by clarifying how and when the LRA FHSZ maps are updated, including how the public can engage meaningfully in the process. The bill would establish a five-year update cycle for the LRA FHSZ maps, a preliminary public release of the maps, require the disclosure of the data, models, and methodology used to develop the designations, and provide opportunities for regional workshops and public comment before maps are transmitted to the local agency for local ordinance adoption. These steps are critical to ensuring public transparency and consistency in how these maps are updated to help protect communities from the threat of wildfires."

Double Referral: This bill passed the Committee on Natural Resources with a 14-0-0 vote.

Prior and Related Legislation:

AB 261 (Quirk Silva, 2025). This bill would have authorized the State Fire Marshal (SFM), in periods between the SFM's review of state responsibility areas (SRAs) and non-SRAs regarding fire hazard severity zones (FHSZs), to confer with entities on actions that may impact the degree of fire hazard in that area and authorizes those entities to provide information to the SFM on wildfire safety improvements, as specified. (Held in Senate Appropriations)

AB 300 (Lackey, 2025) This bill would have required the SFM to review and update the following statutorily required actions every 5 years: identify areas as moderate, high, and very high severity zones, as specified; review the areas identified very high severity zones and make recommendations, as specified; classify lands within state responsibility areas into fire hazard severity zones; and review, and revise as necessary, zone designations, as specified. (Held in Senate Appropriations)

AB 3150 (Quirk-Silva, 2024). This bill would have revised existing fire safety laws by requiring the State Fire Marshal (SFM) to review and update fire hazard severity zones every five years, involve public agencies and other entities in fire hazard assessments, and adopt updated regulations for defensible space and fuel management. In addition, this bill would have shifted responsibilities for maintaining fire safety standards from the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection (BOF) to the SFM and expand the definition of a person responsible for maintaining defensible space to include certain public agencies. (Held in Senate Appropriations)

SB 610 (Wiener, 2024) would have eliminated the state's fire hazard severity mapping for the state responsibility area (SRA) and local responsibility area (LRA) and requires the State Fire Marshal to designate Wildfire Mitigation Area (WMA), through regulations, for fire mitigation across the state. (Held in the Senate Appropriations Committee).

AB 9 (Wood), Chapter 225, Statutes of 2021. Established the Deputy Director of Community Wildfire Preparedness and Mitigation in the Office of the SFM to be responsible for fire preparedness and mitigation missions of CAL FIRE.

SB 63 (Stern), Chapter 382, Statutes of 2021. Made multiple changes in state law to enhance fire prevention efforts by CAL FIRE, including, among other things, improved vegetation management and expanding the area where fire safety building standards apply.

AB 3074 (Friedman), Chapter 259, Statutes of 2020. Establishes, upon appropriation, an ember-resistant zone within five feet of a structure as part of the defensible space requirements for structures located in specified high fire hazard areas. This bill requires removal of material from the ember-resistant zone based on the probability that vegetation and fuel will lead to ignition of the structure by embers.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

American Planning Association, California Chapter
California Association of Realtors
California Building Officials
California State Association of Counties (CSAC)
California Water Association
City of Artesia
City of Belmont
City of Beverly Hills
City of Bradbury
City of Brentwood
City of Buena Park
City of Carlsbad
City of Carpinteria
City of Chino Hills;
City of Emeryville
City of Folsom
City of Glendora
City of La Quinta,

City of LA Verne
City of Laguna Beach
City of Laguna Niguel
City of Lake Forest
City of Lakeport
City of Lomita
City of Los Alamitos
City of Mission Viejo
City of Moorpark
City of Moreno Valley
City of Morro Bay
City of Murrieta
City of Palm Springs,
City of Paramount
City of Paso Robles
City of Paso Robles Fire Department
City of Pico Rivera
City of Pittsburg
City of Rancho Santa Margarita
City of Rocklin
City of Rolling Hills Estates
City of San Clemente
City of San Luis Obispo
City of Stanton
City of Thousand Oaks
City of Tracy
City of Union City
City of Ventura
City of Vista
City of Walnut Creek
City of Whittier
League of California Cities
Mt Shasta
Redwood Empire Division, League of California Cities
Sonoma County Mayors' and Councilmembers' Association
West Hollywood/Hernan Molina, Governmental Affairs Liaison

Opposition

None on file.

Analysis Prepared by: Ryan Fleming / E.M. / (916) 319-3802