

Defensible Space Annual Notice

Frequently Asked Questions

- **Why am I receiving this notice?** Your property is located within a fire hazard severity zone (FHSZ) identified by the Department of Forestry and 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.** FHSZs 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 as, “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...”.
- **There is no brush around my property, why am I being inspected?** If your property is located within a designated FHSZ, 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 FHSZs. 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 for the inspection to be completed.
- **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.

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- **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 Defensible Space Inspection 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, property owners will be mailed a Compliance Letter (meaning you passed the inspection) or receive an inspection report showing the violations that need to be corrected.
- **How much time will I have to make corrections?** Owners have 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? The County of Los Angeles Agricultural Commissioner Weights & Measures Department** has been charging an inspection fee since 1989. The Auditor/Controller reviewed, and the Board of Supervisors approved the Fire Department's implementation of the inspection fee on December 7, 2021. The fee is required to make the defensible space program cost neutral. The Auditor/Controller approved the \$151 inspection fee. The Fire Department phased in the fee: it was \$50 in 2022, \$100 in 2023, and \$151 in 2024.
- **How will I be billed for the inspection fee?** The inspection fee will be assessed annually and will be 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 2024, the property tax assessment will be reflected on the November 2025 property tax bill).
- **What is the purpose of the Referee 'protest' hearings?** The primary purpose of the protest hearing is to allow an owner to contest whether the property is in a FHSZ and should therefore receive an inspection. Owners may also discuss defensible space requirements as desired.

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- **Have there been State law changes impacting the requirement 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: [Assembly Bill 3074](#) and [Assembly Bill 38](#).
- **What is Assembly Bill 3074 (AB 3074)?** [AB 3074](#) introduced “Zone 0” as a 5’ ember resistant zone. When officially adopted by the State Fire Marshal, this law will require a 5’ ember resistant zone around all structures in a FHSZ.
- **When does AB 3074 take effect?** AB 3074 became law on January 1, 2021; however, it has not been enforced. Enforcement will occur when [the State Fire Marshal approves vegetation clearance requirements](#). This is anticipated in 2025. Full enforcement on existing structures will not be required until one year after the State Fire Marshal approves final requirements. Full enforcement on new construction will take effect immediately upon approval of final clearance requirements.
- **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/>