

Summary of October Draft Zone 0 Regulation Language

October 23, 2025

The California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection is considering a new regulation for the “Zone 0” area — the space within five feet of a building or structure – for property and homeowners in certain fire-prone areas of California. These rules are intended to better protect homes and communities, make homes safer from ember storms during wildfires, and improve firefighter safety as fires become more severe and catastrophic.

What the Zone 0 Regulation Does

The rule will require all property owners in State Responsibility Areas (SRA) and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones in the Local Responsibility Area (LRA) to maintain defensible space around buildings. This space, called Zone 0, uses strict standards because it is the area where embers are most likely to ignite a home. Enforcement of this regulation would be phased in over a three-year period, with education and progress towards compliance being the ultimate goal.

Requirements and Summary of Rule Text for Zone 0

The current draft rule (or draft rule language) outlines several steps and factors for homeowners to take as these regulations phase in over a three-year period for existing structures. These include:

- Keeping roofs, gutters, and the area within 5’ of a home free of leaves and needles.
- Removing combustible materials such as firewood near buildings.
- Ensuring that fences and gates attached to buildings must be made of non-combustible materials for the first 5 feet.
- Ensuring that outbuildings within 5 feet be built entirely of non-combustible materials.
- Applying to new construction immediately once this regulation is adopted, and to existing homes over a three-year period.
- Applying discretion across the state for local fire agencies to approve alternative methods that provide similar fire safety results as those outlined in the regulation. Local governments may develop their own compliance methods based on local conditions and materials. Historic buildings can also qualify for exemptions.

Discussion item: Vegetation Options for Zone 0

As the Board subcommittee works to finalize rule language, four different options have emerged for what types of plants or landscaping can be included in this 0–5 foot area:

Option 1 – Some plants in pots allowed

- No flammable landscaping materials are permitted, including grass, shrubs, mulches, etc.
- Exception: potted plants (under 18 inches tall) are allowed if kept away from walls, windows, and vents.

Option 2 – Some plants in pots and low, maintained vegetation allowed

- Same as Option 1 but also allows low plants under 4 inches tall (like moss or lawns) if kept away from walls, vents, and windows.

Option 3 – Some plants, in pots or planted, allowed

- No flammable landscaping materials are permitted including dead or dying plants, mulches, etc.
- Plants 18 inches or less are allowed as long as they are spaced appropriately and not directly beneath, above, or in front of windows, doors, or vents.

Option 4 – Well maintained plants allowed

- Allows plants in pots and other vegetation in Zone 0 but prohibits dead or dying plants, needles, leaves, weeds, and combustible mulches.

Tree Options for Zone 0

There are also options under consideration for the inclusion of trees within 5 feet of buildings:

Tree Option 1: Well-maintained trees allowed, local tree protections included.

- Branches must be at least 5 feet away from walls and above roofs and 10 feet from chimneys.
- Includes exceptions for trees protected by local ordinance.

Tree Option 2: Well-maintained trees allowed, branches must be 10 feet from chimneys

- Nearly identical but does not reference local tree ordinances and only stipulates that branches must be ten feet away from chimneys.

How to Participate

The Board continues to invite public input on this draft rule and the options captured here. Comments can help shape the final regulation that best balances safety and effectiveness for California homeowners.

For more information, please read the latest [Board FAQ](#), track the Board's [Zone 0 webpage](#), and/or submit your comment to PublicComments@bof.ca.gov.

Below is draft rule text that the Zone 0 Regulation Advisory Committee will discuss at a public workshop on October 23, 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 other materials that are likely able to ignite and
4 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 obtained the building permit for initial construction after the effective
12 date of the regulation that added this subsection.

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

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

20
21 **§ 1299.03. Requirements.**

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

24 (a) One hundred feet (100 ft.) of defensible space clearance shall be maintained in two
25 three distinct “Zones” as follows: Zone 0 is the area within five feet (5 ft.) around each

Building or Structure or to the property line, whichever comes first. “Zone 1” extends from five (5ft.) to thirty feet (30 ft.) out from each “Building or Structure,” or to the property line, whichever comes first; “Zone 2” extends from thirty feet (30 ft.) to one hundred feet (100 ft.) from each “Building or Structure,” but not beyond the property line. The vegetation treatment requirements for Zone 0 are more restrictive than for Zone 1; the requirements for Zone 1 are more restrictive than for Zone 2; as provided in this section (a) and (b) below. The Department of Forestry and Fire Protection's “Property Inspection Guide, 2000 version, April 2000,” provides additional guidance on vegetation treatment within Zone 1 and Zone 2, but is not mandatory and is not intended as a substitute for these regulations. For the purposes of compliance with defensible space requirements, the addition of any building, including an Accessory Dwelling Unit as defined in Gov Code section 66313, on a neighboring property shall not require a landowner to create additional defensible space on their property and shall not result in that landowner being found to be out of compliance with defensible space regulations.

(b) Zone 0 Requirements:

OPTION 1:

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

(A) Exception: Plants in pots are allowable if they are in areas that are not directly beneath, above, or in front of a window, glass door, or vent or under eaves; are kept in an unaffixed, not combustible pot or container that is no larger than five (5) gallon capacity; and set apart by one and a half (1.5) times the height of the plant or twelve inches (12”), whichever is

greater, from the structure and each other. These plants shall be no greater than 18 inches in height. Dead or dying material on the plants shall be removed.

OPTION 2

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

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

(B) Exception: Well-maintained plants under four (4) inches tall are allowable if they are in areas that are not directly beneath, above, or in front of a window, glass door, or vent or under eaves.

OPTION 3

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

(A) Exception: Plants ~~in pots~~ are allowed if they are in areas that are not directly beneath, above, or in front of a window, glass door, or vent, or

under eaves; are kept in an unaffixed, not combustible pot or container that is no larger than five (5) gallon capacity; and set apart by one and a half (1.5) times the height of the plant or twelve inches (12”), whichever is greater, from the structure and each other. These plants shall be no greater than 18 inches in height. Dead or dying material on the plants shall be removed.

OPTION 4

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

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

<End Vegetation Options>

<Begin Tree Options>

OPTION 1

(2) Trees within Zone 0 shall be maintained so that they have no dead or dying branches. All live tree branches shall be maintained five feet (5') above the 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 trees protected by local ordinance that are well-pruned and maintained
5 so as to effectively manage fuels and fuel ladders, as provided in Public
6 Resources Code Section 4291.

8 **OPTION 2**

9 (2) Trees within Zone 0 shall be maintained so that there are no dead or dying
10 branches. All live tree branches shall be maintained five feet (5') above the
11 adjacent Building or Structure's roof, ten feet (10') away from chimneys and
12 stovepipe outlets, and five feet (5') away from the sides of any Building or
13 Structure.

14 (B) Exception: this subdivision does not apply to single specimens of trees
15 that are well pruned and maintained so as to effectively manage fuels and
16 fuel ladders, as provided in Public Resources Code Section 4291.

17 **<End Trees Options>**

18 (3) No Combustible items that are likely to be ignited by embers are permitted
19 within Zone 0. The roof and rain gutters of a Building or Structure shall be kept
20 clear of leaves and needles. The area under decks, balconies, and stairs shall be
21 kept free from vegetative material and Combustible items. No firewood storage is
22 permitted within Zone 0 unless that firewood is stored within an Outbuilding
23 constructed entirely of non-Combustible materials.

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

1 (5) Fences that are directly attached to a Building or Structure shall have a five
2 foot (5 ft) non-Combustible span at the point of attachment. After the effective
3 date of this regulation, no new Combustible fences are permitted within five feet
4 (5 ft) of a Building or Structure including an attached deck.

5 (6) Outbuildings are not permitted in Zone 0 [unless they are constructed entirely](#)
6 [of non-Combustible materials.](#)

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

11 (8) For existing Buildings or Structures, the Department may allow [homeowners](#)
12 [to work in stages to support implementation of Zone 0 and address the costs of](#)
13 [compliance.](#)

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

18 (a) Zone 1 Requirements:

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

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

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

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

6 **(bd) Zone 2 Requirements:**

7 (1) In this zone, create horizontal and vertical spacing among shrubs and trees
8 using the “Fuel Separation” method, the “Continuous Tree Canopy” method, or a
9 combination of both to achieve defensible space clearance requirements. Further
10 guidance regarding these methods is contained in the State Board of Forestry
11 and Fire Protection's, “General Guidelines for Creating Defensible Space,
12 February 8, 2006,” incorporated herein by reference, and the “Property
13 Inspection Guide” referenced elsewhere in this regulation.

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

16 (A) Dead and dying woody surface fuels and aerial fuels shall be removed.
17 Loose surface litter, normally consisting of fallen leaves or needles, twigs,
18 bark, cones, and small branches, shall be permitted to a maximum depth
19 of three inches (3 in.).

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

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

24 **(ee) For both Zones 1 and 2:**

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

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

9 (f) A property shall not be deemed out of compliance with these regulations if a good
10 faith effort and plan to work in stages has been provided to the authority having
11 jurisdiction and that authority has approved the plan.

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

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17 **§ 1299.05. Alternative Methods.**

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

22
23 Historically Designated Structures may be granted exemption from specific
24 requirements under § 1299.03 by the authority having jurisdiction. Historically
25 Designated Structures belong to the National Historic Landmarks Program, the National

Register for Historic Places, the California Register of Historical Resources, or any of their successor organizations; alternatively, they may also be the subject of a preservation ordinance by the local city or county having jurisdiction over them, if this local community operates a preservation commission.

§ 1299.06. Provisions for the Authority Having Jurisdiction.

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, at minimum, substantially similar practical effects as those stated in these regulations.

Note: Authority cited: Sections 4290 and 4291, Public Resources Code. Section 51182, Government Code. Reference: Sections 4291 and 4291.3, Public Resources Code.