CAL FIRE

BENEFICIAL FIRE GUIDEBOOK

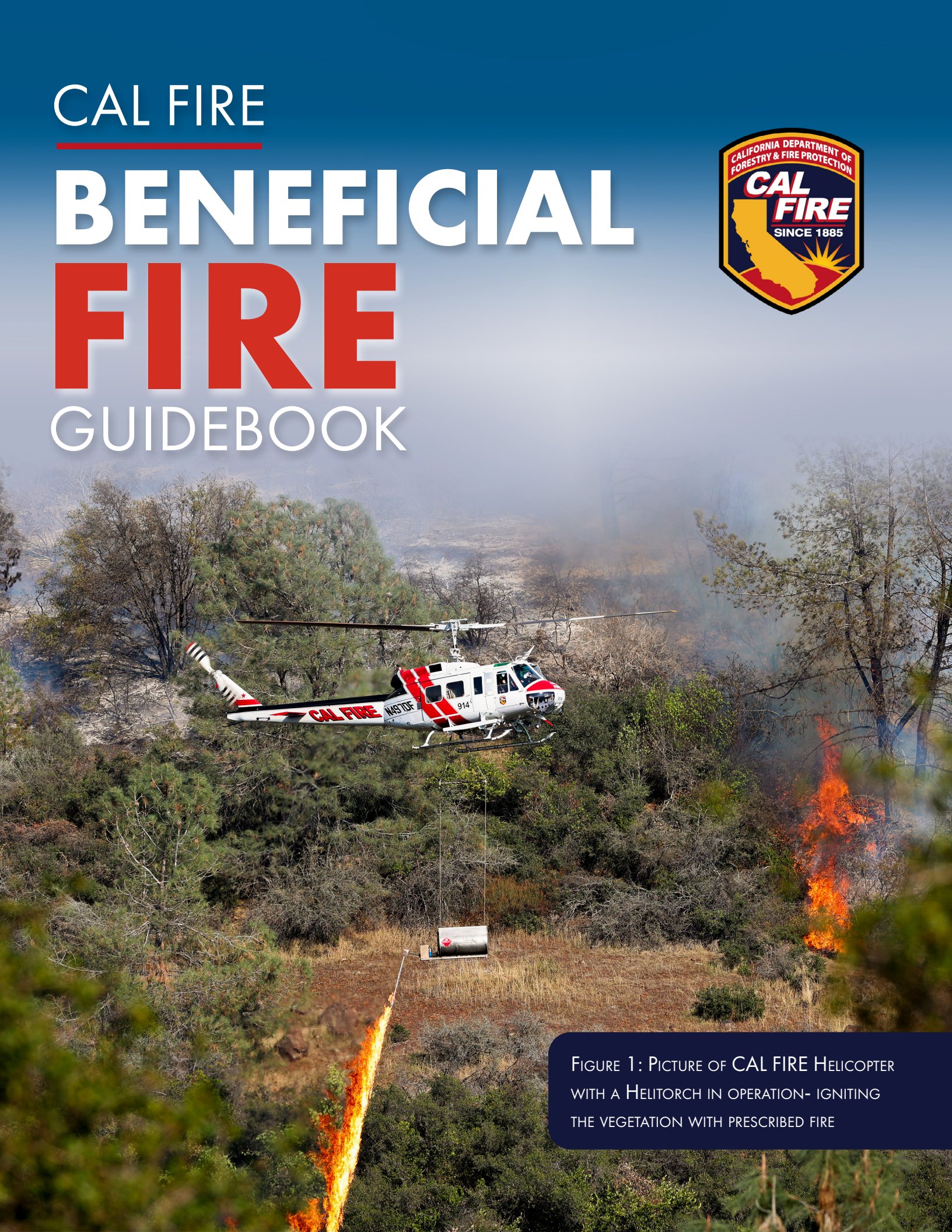


Figure 1: Picture of CAL FIRE Helicopter with a Helitorch in operation- igniting the vegetation with prescribed fire



Table of Contents

Introduction 4
- Purpose 4
- Authority and Background 4
- Prescribed Fire Goals and Objectives 5

Workflow and Organizational Structure 7
- A Phased and Adaptive Approach 7
- Staffing – Roles and Responsibilities 7
- Planning Phase 8
  - Determining Project Area 9
  - Project Selection 10
  - Planning for Beneficial Fire – Cultural and Private Partners 10
- Cultural Fire 10
- Environmental Planning 11
  - Unit Fuels/VMP Coordinator 11
  - Internal Environmental Compliance 11
  - External Environmental Compliance 12
- Operational Planning 12
  - Determining Project Area Operational Boundaries 12
  - Determining Project Prescription 13
  - Determining Operational Complexity 13
  - Risk Management 14
- Live Fire Use Approval and Notification 14
  - Live Fire Use (LFU) 14
  - Go/No-Go Checklist 15
  - Burn Planning 15
- Safety 18
  - Safety Hazards and Mitigation 18
  - Emergency Medical Procedures, Emergency Evacuation Methods, and Emergency Facilities 18
  - Incident Action Plan 19

Implementation Phase 20
- Burning by Non-Agency Practitioners 22
- Burn Escape – Wildfire Declaration 23

Post-Implementation Phase 24
- Immediate Post-Implementation Admin & Rehabilitation 24
- Prescribed Fire Effects Monitoring 24
- Reporting 26
  - CalMapper 26
  - Financial Reporting 26

After Action 26
Documentation 27
Completion Report 27
Optional Documentation 27
Administrative Duties 28
Conclusion 29

Appendix 1: Applicable Laws. 30
Applicable Laws. 30

Appendix 2: Risk Management 37
Risk Management. 37

Appendix 3: Shared Liability. 38
Shared Liability. 38

Appendix 4: Go/No Go Checklist 41



Introduction

Purpose

This guidebook's purpose is to assist California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) employees and other beneficial fire practitioners plan, implement, and document outcomes of beneficial fire activities. Prescribed fire is a strategic tool CAL FIRE and its cooperators use to modify fuels in a manner that moderates fire behavior, increases the effectiveness of initial and extended attack, and improves ecosystem health and services. In turn, this strengthens CAL FIRE's operational capacity to achieve the Department's mission to serve and safeguard the people, property, and resources of California.

Mission Statement:
CAL FIRE serves and safeguards the people and protects the property and resources of California.

Beneficial fire is a term that includes practices known as "cultural fire," "cultural burning," "prescribed fire," "prescribed burning," "good fire," and "managed fire," among others. While beneficial fire is inherently a subjective term, our working definition includes the application of low- to mixed-intensity fire to landscapes to ensure the protection of the public, private property and infrastructure, natural resources, and cultural resources. For information regarding the fire regimes of various ecosystems, please consult local expert practitioners, Fire in California's Ecosystems (Jan W. van Wagtendonk et al., eds., *Fire in California's Ecosystems,* Second edition (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2018), or the California Fire Science Consortium.

Beneficial Fire:
This is a term that considers the beneficial elements of fire with respect to fire adapted human communities, ecosystem function, and fire regimes. This includes prescribed fire and cultural burning. While CAL FIRE may participate in a cultural burn, we do not implement cultural burns; we implement prescribed fire to a landscape to meet objectives on behalf of the landowner, the department, and the State of California.

Authority and Background

This document provides guidance for prescribed fire projects as authorized by California Public Resources Code (PRC) §4475-4483 and the prescribed fire permitting process as authorized by PRC §4491-4494. These and other relevant PRCs have been included in Appendix 1, although users should be aware that this guidebook may not reflect any recent changes to state law, and exercise their due diligence to incorporate changing rules and regulations into practice. This guidebook also provides cooperators insight into CAL FIRE's internal prescribed fire policy, procedures, and practices so that cooperators are more informed when entering into collaborative burning agreements with CAL FIRE[1].

1 Executive Order N-35-25, signed on 10/29/25, highlights the need for this document to better facilitate CAL FIRE's support of prescribed fire planning and implementation by non-CAL FIRE entities.

Since 1981, CAL FIRE has utilized multiple formalized approaches to manage California's fire-prone landscapes. The way CAL FIRE conducts fuels management has evolved substantially over time with various new programs, executive orders, and additional statutes and regulations.

While CAL FIRE may be the lead on a burn, it is imperative for users to remember that when conducting a burn on private property, we are guests on that property. To quote the 1981 Chaparral Management Plan Program Environmental Impact Report:

> "Yet it is the private landowners who give the final say. Without their concurrence and support, no comprehensive disaster prevention or resource management programs are possible. For this reason, government agencies and other stakeholders involved in Coordinated Resource Management and Planning must be sensitive to the objectives of private landowners. Ways must be found to mesh the public and private benefits of land management."

This is a document designed for CAL FIRE and is not meant to be a template for burning by private entities. The information provided herein may prove useful to other entities, such as local governments, private burners, prescribed burn associations, or state certified burn bosses (CARX). Practitioners are encouraged to have working knowledge of this document when they anticipate collaborating with CAL FIRE on specific projects, as it provides insight into internal CAL FIRE process on the planning and use of prescribed fire. It should be used in conjunction with additional resources such as the CARX standardized burn plan template, the University of California, Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC ANR) Guidebook for Prescribed Fire in California (publication pending), and the California Prescribed Burn Association (PBA) website. For more information on collaboration and additional sources, please see Sections Planning for Beneficial Fire - Cultural and Private Partners and Burning by Non-Agency Practitioners.

Prescribed Fire Goals and Objectives

CAL FIRE's Fuels Program, also known as the Vegetation Management Program (VMP), is tasked with modifying vegetation (i.e., horizontal and vertical fuel continuity; total biomass/loading) to enhance public safety, protect property and infrastructure, and improve ecosystem health and services. The overarching goal of the Fuels/Vegetation Management Program is to reduce the negative impacts of damaging wildfires by reducing fire hazards and minimizing risks in California and is consistent with CAL FIRE's mission to protect life, property, and the environment. By reintroducing beneficial fire, we minimize the likelihood, scale, and severity of fire and maintain ecosystem processes in fire adapted portions of the state. While CAL FIRE has jurisdiction to implement prescribed fire in State Responsibility Area (SRA), CAL FIRE's influence and operations may extend statewide and include both local (LRA) and federal responsibility areas (FRA) where Unit priorities align with the priorities of these jurisdictions.

CAL FIRE's intent is to achieve the best balance of public safety and natural resource benefits from ecosystems, consistent with environmental protection and landowner/ objectives. This includes three **general goals**, which encompass most of the specific objectives of the Program:

1. Reduction of deleterious impacts to life, human communities, infrastructure, improvements, ecosystems, and ecosystem services.
2. Increased resilience of fire-adapted landscapes, including the human communities throughout these landscapes.
3. Protection and improvement of ecosystems, including ecosystem resilience, ecosystem services, ecosystem functions, and ecosystem processes.

These goals can be further focused into **specific objectives** regarding the use of prescribed fire. These include:

1. Increase the pace and scale of prescribed fire use to increase public safety and decrease risk to firefighters, first responders, and the public.
2. Reduce frequency and scale of wildfires burning outside of desired fire regime attributes, including severity and fire return interval.
3. Meeting specific landowner management objectives while simultaneously reducing fuel and fire hazard and striving to meet broader community and stakeholder objectives.
4. Improve practice and outcomes through an adaptive management feedback loop.
5. Provide training opportunities for personnel in incident organization, operations, fire behavior, firing methods, and effects of weather influences.
6. Reduce the spread and prevalence of invasive and nonnative species.
7. Improve air quality by utilizing more frequent low-emission events to reduce high impact, long duration, high-emission events.
8. Increase water availability to reduce plant water stress and potentially increase water quantity for downstream users; reduce the potential for water quality degradation by decreasing the potential of large, more severe wildfires.
9. Promote fire dependent species, especially those that are rare, threatened, or endangered.
10. Establish, enhance, and maintain ecosystem processes and functions to achieve desired plant and wildlife communities, composition, and structures.
11. Foster and maintain relationships with stakeholders, such as local, state, federal, private, non-profit, and indigenous/tribal entities.

A Phased and Adaptive Approach

CAL FIRE's prescribed fire program accomplishes program goals and objectives through a three-phased approach that includes: 1) a planning phase consisting of operational and environmental planning; 2) an implementation phase; and 3) a post-implementation phase involving project reporting and post-fire monitoring. A feedback loop ensures that "lessons learned" during the post-implementation phase inform both planning and implementation of future projects (Figure 1). This allows for iterative improvement over time, and a higher likelihood that Program goals and objectives are met. In reality, these phases are not distinct in terms of workflow, as operational planning often blends into implementation, and post-implementation tasks like monitoring may be a requirement of the planning process (e.g., Mitigation Monitoring or Reporting Program associated with the CalVTP).

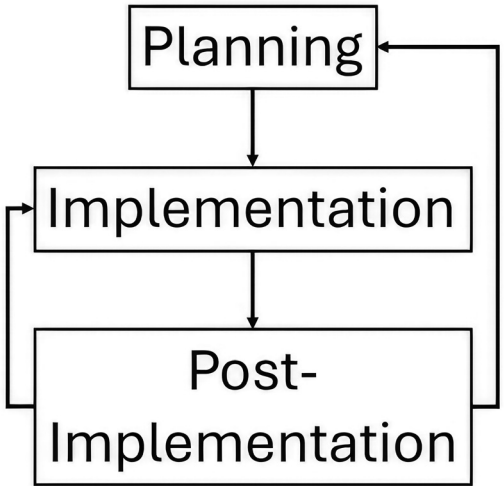


Figure 1. Schematic illustrating the three-phased approach utilized in CAL FIRE's prescribed fire program. Arrows represent workflow linkages and feedback loops to accomplish program objectives.

Staffing – Roles and Responsibilities

Staff at the Unit, Region, and Sacramento levels assume a variety of different functional roles and responsibilities during the three phases of prescribed fire workflow (Table 1).

Table 1. Staff positions and roles/responsibilities associated with the prescribed fire program. P = planning phase; I = implementation phase; and P_I = post-implementation phase.

Position	Roles and Responsibilities
Unit Chief / Agency Administrator	Administrative oversight during planning, implementation, and post-implementation phases; Assigns Prescribed Fire Incident Commander (P, I, P_I).
Unit Fuels/ VMP Coordinator	Project administration and planning with emphasis on environmental regulation compliance (P, I, P_I).
Unit Pre-Fire Engineer	Project administration, planning, and reporting (P, I, P_I).

Position	Roles and Responsibilities
Region Fuels/VMP Coordinator	Reviews planning documents for technical and procedural adequacy (P).
Prescribed Fire Incident Commander	Responsible for implementing the prescribed fire (P, I, P_I).
Prescribed Fire Manager	Responsible for providing assistance during the operations to the IC and/or Burn Boss to support all operations of the burn. May supervise resources as necessary to support operations (I).
Firing Group Supervisor	Supervises and directs ground and aerial ignition operations (I).
Holding Group Supervisor	Supervises and directs holding forces to prevent and mitigate burn escapes (I).
Fire Behavior Analyst	Prepares fire behavior analysis for potential fire effects, fireline safety considerations, and adequacy of operational plan, including both firing and holding. Assists in providing the fire behavior forecast, spot weather forecast, fire modeling runs, and operational updates, and pre-/post-fire effects monitoring (P, I).
Fire Effects Monitor / Fire Behavior Technical Specialist / Field Observer	Responsible for collecting weather, fire behavior, and fire effects including UAV imagery and IR heat analysis data to determine if burn is meeting resource objectives (I, P_I).
Resource Specialist/Resource Advisor	Ensures that projects are planned in a manner that meets goals and objectives. Generally, a position on federal prescribed burns (P).

Planning Phase

Planning for prescribed fire is comprised of both operational and environmental elements. Figure 2 shows the step-wise process associated with, and linkage between, both elements.

Selecting a general project area is the first critical step in the planning process, driving both operational and environmental planning elements. The factors influencing project area selection are not mutually exclusive and include:

1. **Operational Need** – Is the project area identified within a Unit Fire Plan as having the potential to reduce wildfire hazard and/or risk?
2. **Opportunity** – Participation by landowners in our Fuels Program is the key to the Fuels Program. As such, property boundaries associated with willing landowners provide an initial spatial footprint for a potential project area.
3. **Objectives** – Specific objectives beyond that of reducing hazard and risk to life and property may also dictate project location. These may include improving ecosystem resilience, restoring fire-adapted conditions, maintaining ecosystem processes, supporting cultural stewardship, protecting important natural and cultural resources, reducing invasive species, promoting fire-dependent species, improving watershed function, or enhancing ecosystem services. These objectives may influence both the location and spatial scale of a project area.

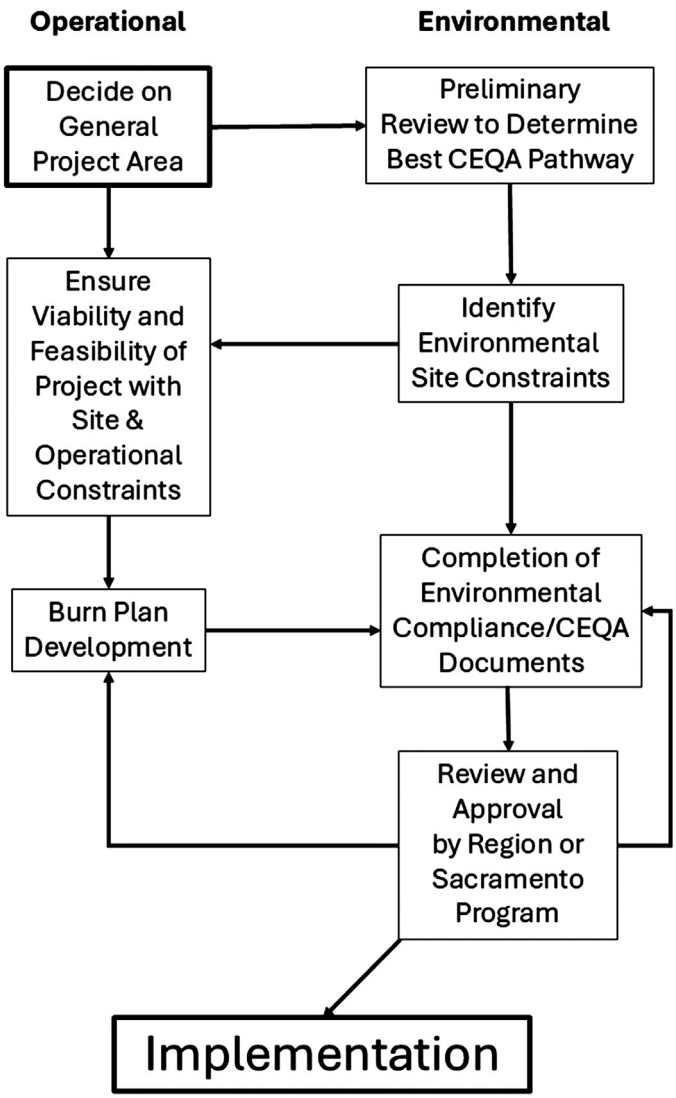


Figure 2. Generalized workflow for the planning phase of prescribed fire projects.

Determining Project Area

The first step in moving forward with a project is to select a project area. Project area may be determined by a willing property owner or a priority of the Unit (e.g., community wildfire defense along with ecological resilience). Some of the considerations for selecting the project area are:

- Property owner request
- Advanced pre-fire planning (e.g., Unit Fire Plan, CWPP, PODs, pre-plans, etc.)
- Specific goals and objectives for a given location (e.g., percent consumption, control of invasive species, etc.)

In the determination of the project area, operational considerations play a large role. These include the use of rivers, ridges, and roads (i.e., selective use of difficult areas for containment, such as mid-slope). Additionally, ensuring that the project area includes an area for the contingency plan is paramount; advanced identification of contingency holding features, including interagency cooperative agreements.

Project Selection

Choosing where to engage with beneficial fire depends on the goals of the beneficial fire project proponent. These goals may include a desire to protect property, reduce risk to a community, or support traditional land stewardship. During the planning phase, selecting the right project and right timing generally include consideration of these concepts:

1. Willing landowners
2. Clearly defined objectives
3. Operational Details (including holding, firing, and contingency plans)
4. Weather and fuel conditions are appropriate

Planning for Beneficial Fire – Cultural and Private Partners

For Californians, the shift toward beneficial fire is a response to the devastating reality of modern "megafires." After more than a century of strict fire suppression, many of California's landscapes are unnaturally dense with fuel. Beneficial fire – which includes prescribed burns (led by agencies and landowners) and cultural burning (led by Indigenous communities) – is seen as an effective tool to restore fire regimes and ecosystem function.

Planning for a beneficial fire project involves the same general steps – determining the project location, project area, and participating entities. In this instance, the private property owner can elect to burn on their own, utilize a California Prescribed Fire Burn Boss (CARX), utilize a cultural fire practitioner, or contract with the fire authority having jurisdiction (i.e., CAL FIRE). There are many elements to consider, including, but not limited to, liability, feasibility, time constraints, costs, availability of resources, permits and objectives.

All interested parties are encouraged to coordinate and collaborate with their closest CAL FIRE station personnel for guidance and advice. Additional resources may be found with the local Prescribed Burn Association (PBA), University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC ANR) Fire Network, Fire Safe Council, and Resource Conservation District, to name a few.

Cultural Fire

Cultural burning is separate and distinct from prescribed fire. While both forms of beneficial fire are essential to restoring resiliency to the landscape, cultural burning has history, motivation, and meaning which includes but also goes beyond wildfire protection benefits to include highly sophisticated ecological and cultural benefits. By recognizing the inherent rights and sovereign authority of Tribes and cultural fire practitioners to engage in the use of cultural burning across their lands of territorial affiliation, landscapes can be returned to a condition in which ecological cycles and principles as well as Indigenous knowledge, practice, and belief systems are recognized and respected. (Good Fire II Report, 2024)

"Cultural burn" or "cultural burning" means the "intentional application of fire to land by a California Native American tribe, a tribal organization, or a cultural fire practitioner to achieve cultural goals or objectives, including for sustenance, ceremonial activities, biodiversity, or other benefits." (California Public Resources Code § 4002.4)

"Cultural fire practitioner" means a person recognized by a California Native American tribe or tribal organization as having substantial experience in burning to meet cultural goals or objectives, including for sustenance, ceremonial activities, biodiversity, or other benefits. (California Public Resources Code § 4002.6).

Environmental Planning

Environmental planning is a critical component of prescribed fire project development that helps ensure beneficial fire achieves public safety objectives while also supporting ecological, cultural, and resource management goals. Across much of California, decades of fire exclusion have altered fuel conditions, ecosystem processes, and fire regimes, increasing wildfire risk to communities, infrastructure, natural resources, and cultural resources. Environmental planning helps practitioners evaluate existing conditions, identify opportunities and constraints, develop project objectives, and integrate resource protection measures into project design and implementation. In addition to ensuring compliance with applicable laws and regulations, environmental planning helps inform the use of beneficial fire to reduce wildfire hazard and risk, increase landscape resilience, and achieve desired resource outcomes consistent with CAL FIRE's mission and landowner objectives.

Unit Fuels/VMP Coordinator

Environmental planning ensures that prescribed fire projects achieve their intended ecological, cultural, and community benefits while complying with applicable laws and regulations. Environmental planning identifies both opportunities and constraints that inform project design, implementation, and monitoring. Project location and treatment activities dictate the resources of concern that must be analyzed under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and protected under existing environmental laws and regulations. Environmental planning for prescribed fire projects may be done internally by CAL FIRE staff or by an external party. Specific procedures may vary depending on the applicable environmental review pathway and the lead agency responsible for compliance. Environmental requirements, protection measures, and project design features identified through environmental review must be incorporated into operational planning and implementation for prescribed fire projects to be successful in complying with legal requirements and achieving desired outcomes. Completing CEQA is a process that provides transparency of the decision determination made by the project proponent to conduct the project.

Internal Environmental Compliance

Non-emergency CAL FIRE projects must comply with the CEQA (unless the project is exempt from CEQA or CEQA has been suspended by Executive Order or other legal mechanism), other applicable environmental laws and regulations, and CAL FIRE's internal procedures (CAL FIRE Handbook 5320, pending). Any time CAL FIRE resources or funds are being utilized, CEQA compliance is required, regardless of whether CAL FIRE is the Lead Agency, as defined by CEQA.

There are many ways to comply with CEQA, a complete discussion of which is beyond the scope of this document. Programmatic Environmental Impact Reports (PEIRs) like the Chaparral Management Plan (CMP) and the California Vegetation Treatment Plan (VTP) offer a framework for analyzing and minimizing prescribed fire impacts. These PEIRs vary in the environmental settings in which they may be used for CEQA compliance, the procedural intensity of analysis for various resource categories, and/or the complexity of determining and implementing protective and avoidance measures.

In addition, some prescribed fire projects may be exempt from CEQA pursuant to certain Categorical and Statutory Exemptions. In the case of Categorical Exemptions, project proponents must make sure that none of the exceptions listed in §15300.2 would preclude application of a Categorical Exemption to the project. Although Statutory Exemptions typically do not apply to prescribed fire projects, as of 2025, Public Resources Code § 21080.49 exempts certain small-scale prescribed fire (i.e., ≤50 acres) projects if other requirements are met. CAL FIRE staff who have questions about environmental compliance (e.g., CEQA) or are seeking guidance on how to analyze the environmental impacts of a prescribed fire project on the various resource categories listed in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, should reach out to Regional Fuels/Vegetation Management staff. Program Fuels, Prescribed Fire, and Environmental Compliance staff are also available from Sacramento Headquarters.

Practitioners and Administrators should be aware that the constraints within the environmental documents that are approved for a particular project are binding for implementation of that project – outside of Emergency situations (escape/wildfire declaration). Practitioners and Administrators should ensure environmental compliance is in place, and that all project "activities" are covered by the approved environmental compliance document, prior to project implementation. Notwithstanding that there is no direct, third-party regulatory oversight of environmental compliance on prescribed fire projects, internal oversight can still take place by implementing monitoring and feedback measures.

External Environmental Compliance

CAL FIRE may be asked to implement or assist with burns planned by an external lead agency. In these cases, Unit staff must follow the prepared CEQA or NEPA document or exemption. Before burning is planned or implemented, staff must determine if prescribed fire was analyzed as a treatment and that the potential burn units conform with the boundary of the project area analyzed with environmental compliance completed. Conformance with protection measures and environmental laws is still required, and this involves coordination between external lead staff and the Unit Environmental Coordinator / Forestry staff.

PRC § 21065 states that a project is subject to CEQA if it is undertaken by a public agency or a project that is supported, in whole or in part, by a public agency through contracts, grants, subsidies, loans, or other forms of assistance. Therefore, historically, CEQA applied to CAL FIRE's support of others' prescribed fire projects; however, on October 29, 2025, Governor Gavin Newsom issued Executive Order N-35-25, which directs CAL FIRE to assist local agencies and beneficial fire practitioners to complete beneficial fire projects that limit dangerous wildfire conditions to the greatest extent feasible, and waives the application of CEQA to the extent necessary to comply with that direction. To implement this directive, the department has identified different levels of support that CAL FIRE may provide for a project (Executive Order N-35-25; Temporary Directive; CAL FIRE Handbook 5320, pending):

- **Assigned**: A resource is at scene of an incident and not available to respond to a new incident without delay.
- **Assist**: A resource is at scene and actively engaged in prescribed fire operations but available to respond to a new incident.
- **Stand by**: A resource is at or near the scene of an ongoing incident or prescribed fire operation but is available to respond to a new incident.

Pursuant to the Executive Order, CEQA is not required when CAL FIRE engages in "assist" and "standby" activities but may be completed when CAL FIRE is "assigned" for a prescribed fire. As of the date of this publication, Assembly Bill 1699 ("the Good Fire Act") is pending. If enacted and signed by the Governor, the Good Fire Act would make this a permanent CEQA exemption under PRC § 21080.49.1.

Operational Planning

Operational planning is a necessary step to ensure that an implemented burn complies with applicable laws and regulations, sets an appropriate burn prescription, achieves burn objectives, and accounts for firefighter and public safety. This blurs the lines between planning and implementation, as the planning continues into the project itself.

Determining Project Area Operational Boundaries

While the project area had been selected during the Planning Phase, this moves into the operational decision-making process. The most common control line features are rivers, ridges, and roads. This approach uses preexisting control features, such as watercourses or existing native surface roads to facilitate project implementation. This approach

increases the efficiency of the project while also selecting lines that will more readily support control and containment. While other features may be used depending on the nature of the project (e.g., a midslope road), the ability to maintain the planned event within its planned area is of utmost importance. The use of control features goes hand-in-hand with the prescription to maintain safety for the project practitioners, to keep the project within the planned area, and to meet the project objectives. Additionally, ensuring that the project area includes an area for the contingency plan is paramount; advanced identification of contingency holding features, including agreements, is a critical element of operational planning.

Determining Project Prescription

The next step with the process is to determine a prescription. The prescription and its planned outcomes/impacts will be the foundation for the environmental analysis, the firing/ignition plan, the holding plan, and the contingency plan. The critical element is to design a prescription that meets landowner objectives, facilitates department objectives for fuel hazard reduction and defensible space, and creates a safe environment for firefighters during both the planned event and future unplanned ignitions. Ecological principles and local knowledge, whether from agency personnel, landowners, or indigenous/cultural burners, should help inform the prescription.

Units are strongly suggested to utilize a Fire Behavior Analyst (FBAN) to facilitate the prescription. This involves the modeling of fire behavior. While non-spatial, point-based models such as BehavePlus may be used, more advanced spatial models can yield much better results, including Wildfire Analyst (WFA), FARSITE, IFTDSS, and others. FBANs have experience in many vegetation types with both operational and planning elements. Their training in weather systems, fuels, flammability, and fire behavior modeling uniquely suits them to assist in the selection of burning conditions to yield the best results for project objectives.

FBANs, Prescribed Fire Coordinators, and Incident Commanders should discuss how to analyze the project area, such as the placement of a portable RAWS, E-BAM, or other data collection methods. Additionally, this is an opportunity to coordinate with the research community. This should be communicated in conjunction with FRAP and Sacramento Fuels/Vegetation Management Program for statewide coordination and collaboration.

Determining Operational Complexity

Complexity refers to the interconnectedness and dependence of the individual elements as they relate to the planning and implementation of the prescribed fire. As such, this has direct implications for workflow during the course of project design and implementation. The determination of operational complexity will be completed in conjunction with the Live Fire Use application (also referenced as the FC 400 form).

Currently, the process has been redesigned as a tool that identifies and characterizes the risk/reward of a project and the technical difficulty or complexity of the work involved to mitigate these risks. The Complexity Analysis process provides help with:

1. Value Identification.
2. Assessment of Risks to the Values.
3. Assessment of Technical Difficulty in mitigating the Risk to Values.
4. A Final Complexity Determination that identifies the minimum required Prescribed Fire Incident Commander qualification level.

The complexity analysis is developed by considering risks and incorporating actions to mitigate those risks into the appropriate sections of the prescribed fire plan. Assessing the risk that a prescribed fire poses to identified values consists of estimating the probability and severity of adverse impacts. Once the prescribed fire plan is near completion, the final operational complexity analysis and rating is determined through review by the Unit Chief and the

Region Fuels/VMP Coordinator. The final complexity rating, which acknowledges any remaining risk and mitigations to be undertaken, will be used as the basis for determining the prescribed fire organizational structure and type of Prescribed Fire Incident Commander required to successfully implement the prescribed fire plan.

Determining the complexity of a prescribed fire starts with understanding the on-site, off-site, and public and political values associated with the prescribed fire. Values are features that have inherent worth (significance), including humans and their developments, natural resources, and public, political, and cultural elements. Environmental analyses, land management plans, other documents, inventories, site visits, and interdisciplinary team input provide the information necessary to identify valuable features, their significance, and their susceptibility to negative impacts from the prescribed fire.

Values may not be equal in significance. A project may have one significant value with considerable social and political ramifications if impacted by the prescribed fire. Another project may have many values associated with it with less significance and fewer ramifications if impacted. Identifying the number and significance of values provides the foundation for identifying and mitigating the risks to the values during the planning process.

A review of the risk elements, discussed further in the next section and Appendix 2, and their associated descriptors prior to a project site visit may assist with verifying the values and subsequently assessing the risk to them. The values typically do not change through the complexity assessment process unless that value is physically removed from the project area or area of impact.

Risk Management

In the context of prescribed fire, risk is the likelihood that the burn will result in negative outcomes, such as escaping containment, causing property or environmental damage, causing injury or death, or creating smoke-related issues. Sound risk management is a foundation for all fire management activities. Risks and uncertainties relating to fire management activities must be analyzed and understood to determine the trade-offs associated with a burn. If the benefits outweigh the potential risks, then risks must be clearly communicated and managed in a way that prescribed fire objectives can be achieved without significant consequences.

Prescribed fires present an inherent level of risk. Risk management occurs at all levels, from decision-makers to on-the-ground prescribed fire practitioners and the public. The overall prescribed fire planning process includes a risk assessment and reflects an understanding of the interaction of objectives and implementation limitations for the project. Risk management is discussed further in Appendix 2.

Live Fire Use Approval and Notification

It is important to be deliberate and certain in operational decision making about prescribed fire projects. This is especially true of any projects involving cooperators or those that may result in shared liability. The NWCG PMS 484 document also has excellent information on decision making about prescribed fire. It is recommended that all CAL FIRE practitioners review that publication.

CAL FIRE has two processes that are necessary to document the deliberative process and are also helpful reminders of what to consider: (1) the Live Fire Use; and (2) the Go/No-Go Checklist (see Appendix 4).

Live Fire Use (LFU)

Live fire use may impact operational and management decisions due to potential fire behavior, availability of resources, commitments to training, instructional or media value, the visibility of smoke, and interest generated by highly

visible activity. Communication between the Units and Region regarding burn projects is vital. Each Unit will have a planning, review, and approval process that flows into the LFU Portal. See Live Fire Use Terminology for additional information.

- An Incident Action Plan (IAP) will be prepared for each project
- For all projects requiring approval or notification, the LFU Portal will be used (CAL FIRE Handbook 5320, pending)
    - Level I: A project requiring Unit and Region Duty Chief approval. A project with multiple 48-hour notification requests and will require resources from an additional unit(s) and is relatively complex. Likely multiple operational periods with major resource commitment. May impact region resource availability. May have continuous operational periods.
    - Level II: A project requiring Unit and Region Duty Chief approval. A project with multiple 48-hour notifications requests and requires mainly resources from within the unit. May have moderate resource commitment. May include multiple operational periods but not to exceed 5 continuous operational periods.
    - Level III: A project requiring Unit Duty Chief approval only. A project with One 48-hour notification and minimal commitment of unit resources. Likely one operational period necessary but not to exceed 3 continuous operational periods. Numerous burn piles being ignited may constitute a level III burn at the discretion of the Project Lead.

To request approval, the notification shall be submitted at least 48 hours prior to the proposed date of the burn (CAL FIRE Handbook 5320, pending). When requesting a burn authorization with less than 48-hour notice, the Unit Duty Chief will contact the Region Duty Chief for authorization.

To track broadcast burning for vegetation management, hazard reduction, and training in State Responsibility Areas (SRA), the Live Fire Use Portal will be used, as well as the Aircraft Use Calendar. The Region Duty Officer will maintain the Aircraft Use Calendar. Sacramento HQ Fuels/VMP Program maintains the LFU Portal.

Go/No-Go Checklist

A prescribed fire should never begin prior to the Prescribed Fire Incident Commander completing a Go/No-Go Checklist. All the steps indicated in the checklist should be strictly adhered to prior to any ignition. See Appendix 4 for a copy of the Go/No-Go Checklist.

Burn Planning

Burn Plan

This section will provide common language and guidance to describe what is minimally acceptable documentation for prescribed fire planning and implementation. Units may choose to provide more restrictive standards and direction but must adhere to these minimum standards as they relate to the development of burn plans.

Broadcast fire projects can only be implemented through an approved burn plan. A thorough planning and review process must be conducted. Burn plan detail will vary in relation to the size and complexity of the project.

The burn plan will provide a description of the burn area (fuel types, topography, local weather patterns, general access), maps, goals and objectives, prescription parameters (environmental and fire behavior), on/off-site pre-burn considerations (contacts, notices, postings), ignition plan (start/end locations, pattern, pace, complexities with multiple burn teams, go/no-go checklist, test fire), holding and contingency plan (minimum resources, locations/distribution; dependent on complexity), wildfire/escape conversion plan, risk-management considerations, and postburn criteria. Private Beneficial fire practitioners are recommended to use the California Standardized Prescribed Fire Plan Template.

Maps

Maps will be developed and included with the burn plan. The number of maps, map size and scale, legend, and level of detail should be appropriate for the complexity of the project. All maps will include the standard mapping elements: title, name of preparer(s), date, north arrow, scale, and legend.

- **Vicinity / Travel Map:** Map scale will be such that the project area can be located by persons unfamiliar with the area/project. Include travel routes from the nearest city or major landmark. Vicinity and Travel may be split into two separate maps, depending on project location and scale.
- **Project Map(s):** The project map(s) identify features in sufficient detail to guide and assist in operational implementation of the prescribed fire. The project map should show roads, the burn unit(s) boundary(ies), topographic features and significant features such as fences, power poles, areas to be protected, potential hazards, areas of special concern, and control line locations. Project map scale shall be no less than 1:24,000**.**
- **Fuels or Fuel Model Map(s):** Optional but recommended for long-duration or landscape-level projects. Include as needed to describe the spatial complexity of the fuels. Display the distribution of the fire behavior fuel models (e.g., Scott & Burgan 40) or other fuels classifications, such as Fuels Characteristic Classification System (http://www.fs.fed.us/pnw/fera/fccs/index.shtml), within and adjacent to the project and ignition units.
- **Smoke Impact Area Map(s):** Optional but recommended for projects with critical smoke receptors or significant smoke concerns. This is a large-scale map that identifies the potential smoke impact areas for the project and ties in with PFIRS. The local air quality authority usually defines the constraints to be considered for the smoke impacts.

Contingency Planning



A contingency plan is an addendum to the burn plan prepared in correlation to burn complexity and resource risk. The plan considers low probability but high consequence events, and necessary mitigations. By addressing the "what-ifs" ahead of time, resources are able to quickly respond to trigger points and their pre-assigned roles. Contingency planning is not limited to escape and wildfire declaration, and could also include smoke management, incidents within the incident, or other unplanned emergencies. Contingency plans are required on complex burns (CAL FIRE Handbook 7030.10).

If an escape occurs, the contingency plan speeds expansion of the organization, allowing resources to act quickly through pre-identified roles. A contingency plan should identify control locations, values at risk, decision points, and resource needs. The plan shall identify who is responsible for wildfire declaration, and the necessary notifications.



Liability

Generally speaking, there are three main types of potential legal liability associated with beneficial fire activities: (1) damages for property that is harmed by implementation of the prescribed fire; (2) damages for injuries caused by implementation of the prescribed fire; and (3) the suppression or investigation costs incurred by fire management agencies when a fire escapes containment. Who is ultimately responsible for any liabilities that arise from a burn requires a fact-intensive inquiry into the cause of the damage, whether the damage resulted from a lack of reasonable care, and whether any legal agreements were in place to apportion liability before the damage occurred. This is a point of concern when it comes to prescribed fire, especially when more than one entity is involved in planning and implementing a project.

CAL FIRE's potential legal liability for a burn generally depends on CAL FIRE's level of participation, which can be thought of as a spectrum. On one end of the spectrum, where CAL FIRE's participation in a burn is limited to issuing a burn permit, CAL FIRE's potential liability for any damage resulting from that burn is low. On the opposite end of the spectrum, where CAL FIRE has full authority over a burn, CAL FIRE's potential liability for any damage resulting from that burn is high.

Whenever CAL FIRE conducts, is assigned to, or assists on a burn on land that is not owned by CAL FIRE or involves participation of cooperators, an agreement addressing the potential for legal liability is required (RM-70, RM-75, RM-80). (PRC §§ 4475, 4476). Where CAL FIRE has full operational authority over a burn, CAL FIRE typically assumes 100% of the liability for the burn in these agreements; however, CAL FIRE may share liability with another entity – public or private – based on the project specifications. Sharing liability with another entity may exist only after consultation with Region Fuels/VMP Staff, Sacramento Fuels/VMP Staff, and Legal. See Appendix 3 for the process table to determine an initial project liability ranking.



Safety

Every person involved in a prescribed fire is responsible for identifying safety issues and concerns. It is the responsibility of individuals participating in prescribed fire activities to notify their immediate supervisor of any possible misunderstanding of assigned tasks or safety concerns related to the assignment. Use a designated safety officer on high complexity prescribed fires and others where the complexity or other risk analysis shows a need.

Safety Hazards and Mitigation

Provisions for public and personnel safety must be identified in the Incident Action Plan (IAP). All personnel who are within the active prescribed fire area are required to wear all personal protective equipment. The plan needs to identify and analyze the safety hazards unique to the individual prescribed fire project and specify personnel safety and emergency procedures. It must include safety hazards (including smoke exposure, smoke on roads, and other impacts) and measures taken to reduce those hazards. An Incident Action Plan Safety Analysis (ICS 215A) is required for each prescribed fire. The purpose of the ICS 215A is to aid in completing a risk assessment to prioritize hazards, safety, and health issues, and to develop appropriate controls. Because this worksheet addresses challenges, it is best utilized in the planning phase and for briefings.

Emergency Medical Procedures, Emergency Evacuation Methods, and Emergency Facilities

The emergency medical procedures and evacuation methods discussion should address stabilization and transport of accident victim(s). Identification of medical evacuation options, clarification of local, county, state, or federal resource capabilities, ordering procedures, role of dispatch centers, and key contacts or liaisons should be included. Incorporate a Medical Plan (ICS 206) that includes emergency medical and injury reporting procedures into the prescribed fire plan. An ICS 206 is required for each prescribed fire.

Incident Action Plan

A complete IAP is required for all CAL FIRE prescribed fire projects. The minimum components include the ICS 202, 204 (with specific designation of holding and firing forces; these may be the same for low complexity projects such as pile burning), 205, 206, and 208, as well as the Spot Weather Forecast. Additional IAP elements may be required based on the complexity and duration of the project. Units should utilize a Planning Section Chief or Resources Unit Leader to create the IAP. Projects should also prioritize the inclusion of a Fire Behavior Analyst to analyze the fuels, prescription, and anticipated fire behavior.

Implementation Phase

The implementation phase consists of control line construction, placement of firefighting supplies and equipment, as needed, completion of administrative approval tasks, and the prescribed burn itself. The administrative approval tasks range from complying with department policies and procedures, including compliance with supporting environmental documentation, to maintaining agreements and commitments to property owners.

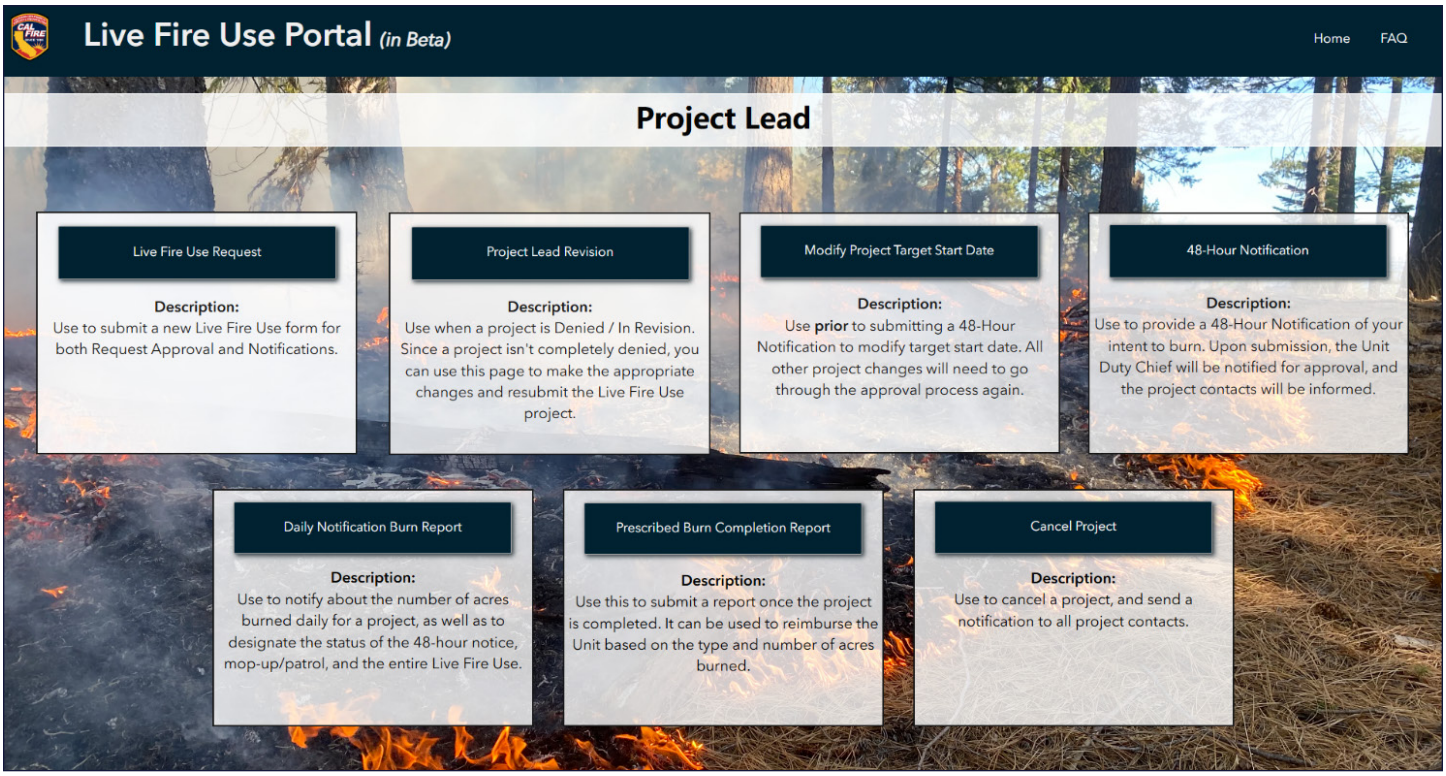
The steps involved in the Implementation Phase may vary based on the project, yet the concepts remain the same regardless of project specifics. Coordination among planning and field personnel is critical. While there is variation between units with respect to which position holds responsibility for each task, it is the communication and coordination of the unit's team that results in the successful completion of projects.

A possible sequence of events for a prescribed fire project is:



- Ensure Live Fire Use process is complete
- Complete aircraft use authorization, if needed
- Ensure Prescribed Fire Information Reporting System(PFIRS) is complete
- Set up traffic control, division breaks, and other signs on site
- Validate control lines
    - Include primary, secondary, and contingency lines as warranted by project complexity, fuels, topography/ alignment, assets at risk, etc.
- Install dry hose lays (pre-plumb), water sources (e.g., pumpkins, folda-tanks, etc.).
- Look for proper weather window
    - Look for general weather patterns that match the ideal or preferred weather components from the burn plan
    - Corroborate estimated conditions by contacting local NWS fire weather desk
    - Initiate discussion with Rx project personnel (i.e., IC, Ops, Firing Group, Fuels/VMP Coordinator, Duty Chief, ECC Duty Captain, FBAN, etc.)
- Initiate conference calls with air quality, NWS, project personnel (e.g., Firing, Ops, IC, Fuels/VMP Coordinator, etc.)
    - Start around 1 week out to ensure forecast is appropriate or even ideal for burning conditions
    - Continue daily or so as warranted to keep on task, update Unit for staffing
    - Ensure 72-hr, 48-hr, and 24-hr calls take place to finalize potential to move resources
    - Best practice is to wait until after 12Z latest Wx updates from models, usually conference call around 1530 or 1600 PST

- Create/finalize IAP, including maps, briefing materials, etc.
    - Include Spot Weather Forecast with latest information - night prior or very early morning print for briefing
    - Staff adequately, including Command Staff
    - Coordinate with ECC & Duty Chief for incident staffing, night shift, additional operational periods of mop-up/patrol, station coverage, and general concerns related to regional draw-down
- Make notifications:
    - Property owner(s)
    - Logistical support (porta potties, lunch, helitorch mix base, etc.)
    - Update PFIRS with ignition request night prior to burn – local air district (may have to prep in advance for them to check authorization after hours or on a weekend)
    - Notify neighboring parcel owners, communities, media, social media of potential burn (including road signs, if applicable)
    - Update Project Lead burn date in Live Fire Use Authorization, 48-hr notification



- Go/No-Go Checklist on site, approvals; and
- Conduct Rx project;
    - Some projects require rapid ignitions or sequential timing, such as large areas of shrub/chaparral that require pulling a fire into itself, multiple helitorches, or other complexities
    - Some projects require slow ignitions and very little fire on the ground, such as burning in the timber with an objective for minimal mortality or scorch
- Timber burns can benefit from light ground winds, which carry the heat away from canopies
- Also consider residual heat from smoldering, especially in the duff layer, as this can kill the fine root systems and can lead to delayed mortality
    - Firing should base project progress on observed fire behavior and project objectives, not rushing to complete the project by a certain time

- Consider ceasing ignitions by a specific time (e.g., 1500) in order to allow for consumption followed by mop-up/extinguishment to minimize smoke production when impacts may be greater (e.g., burning in heavy fuels with wind carrying smoke to a hospital)
- This coincides with the planning phase, when considering breaking the total project area into smaller burn block units to manage feasibility for any given burn period. This also plays into the after-action review for improved planning for future projects.
    - Ensure the project and resource objectives are being achieved to meet the objectives, landowner/stakeholder desired results. If unable, consider stopping the project until conditions are more favorable
    - Consider rotating personnel to address fatigue during long drip-torch firing or terra torch operations
    - Consider prepositioning additional fuel and/or drip torches along the path to allow for rapid movement of firing

Upon completion of ignitions, notify the ECC and follow other unit policies, as appropriate. Holding forces remain in place until the IC, Ops, or other designee directs them to begin mop-up and extinguishment. This achieves multiple objectives: 1) the elimination of heat sources that may spread across the planned project boundary; 2) the elimination of smoldering particulate matter production; and 3) the eventual release of resources as risk diminishes. Holding resources remain on site until the threat has ended and the project is declared controlled or until the property and project jurisdiction is handed to another, such as the landowner (if discussed in the burn plan and agreed to in advance).

While implementation resources are in place, they may begin some of the post-implementation tasks, such as:

- Installation of erosion control devices (i.e., waterbreaks or waterbars) to stabilize bare mineral soil on control lines
- Photo monitoring (utilizing the same location and direction as pre-photos, as discussed below)
- Evaluation of objectives (i.e., percent fuel consumption)
- Notification of completion to air quality, Live Fire Use application, CalMAPPER, etc.

For a thorough discussion of these post-implementation considerations, see the following section.

Burning by Non-Agency Practitioners

While this document serves as the guidebook for CAL FIRE personnel, much of the material is applicable to the public. Whether a California Certified Prescribed Fire Burn Boss (CARX), a cultural fire practitioner (as defined by PRC § 4002.6), or a member of the public, the implementation phase consists of ensuring that: 1) adequate planning has transpired; 2) adequate resources are in place; and 3) appropriate conditions exist to meet project objectives.

The implementation phase requires strong communication and coordination among all of the constituent elements, whether a few burners with water and shovels managing a burn pile or multiple burners with multiple pumps, fire hose, hand tools, and even equipment for a larger broadcast burn. Communication with fire control agencies is critical, as well. These steps are outlined in the burn permit (when required).



Burn Escape – Wildfire Declaration

In the event that lands of a non-cooperating party are burned, or when conditions exceed the ability of the resources at scene to mitigate a slop or spot, the IC shall declare a wildfire. This will transition to wildfire suppression tactics – where and when needed to mitigate the escape. The IC has the authority to manage the incident based on conditions.

An after-incident report may be required.

Post-Implementation Phase

Immediate Post-Implementation Admin & Rehabilitation

Notify ECC of completion of project. Complete LFU completion report. Coordinate with property owner for follow-up needs, such as:

- **Identify any repair** that is to be accomplished, who is to do it, and when it is to be completed.
- **Communicate with landowners** that the fire is controlled and contained, that CAL FIRE's responsibility for the condition, operation, and use of the property has concluded, and to ensure their objectives have been met.

Prescribed Fire Effects Monitoring

The evaluation of burn objectives and other impacts of your prescribed burn is essential to inform future prescribed fire activities. Post-burn evaluations help landowners and managers to keep accurate records of prescribed burn successes, failures, and unintended outcomes. These evaluations can also serve as a baseline to track and plan future management activities, including considerations for future burns. This is especially important as it is likely to require multiple burn entries to meet long-term resource management objectives. Monitoring can be broken into broad types based on general objectives:

- **Implementation Monitoring** – Can be used to determine if mitigation or protective measures were put into place as per the environmental assessment and/or planning document.
- **Compliance Monitoring** – Can be used to determine if regulatory limits were met or exceeded. For instance, were air quality standards met during the burn?
- **Effectiveness Monitoring** – Were the desired outcomes achieved following the burn?

The scope and effort associated with monitoring will also depend upon objectives. Project monitoring is typically associated with a single or multiple burns within a discrete project area. This type of monitoring can be conducted by Unit staff using relatively simple qualitative methods or photo-point monitoring, typically focused on questions of implementation or compliance (i.e., were sensitive areas adequately protected?). Programmatic monitoring will be conducted by the Fire and Resource Assessment Program (FRAP) or in collaboration with research entities. Programmatic monitoring typically has a robust and statistically-sound sampling design and is usually used to answer questions regarding practice or program effectiveness.

The level of detail used in post-fire monitoring will largely depend on the specific objectives of the burn. Burn plans may describe either short-term or long-term objectives and vary considerably by vegetation type. It is not necessary to monitor every objective. Some monitoring is better than no monitoring at all. Examples of ecological objectives include:

- Reduce the abundance of nonnative plant species
- Increase the species richness of native plants
- Maximize mortality in small diameter trees
- Minimize mortality in large diameter trees
- Reduce surface fuel loading
- Reduce shrub cover
- Increase quality and quantity of forage/browse

- Promote natural regeneration for desired tree species
- Prepare sites for tree planting
- Shift species composition toward more fire-tolerant species
- Create habitat features (such as snags)

At minimum, post-burn evaluations should include:

- Date
- Time of burn
- Location of burn
- Firing techniques
- Hourly weather observations (if possible)
- Which burn objectives were and were not met?
- List any issues that came up during the burn
    - Weather
    - Communication
    - Control issues
- Notes



Pre- and post-burn photos are a common minimum effort for prescribed fire monitoring. Monitoring points may be marked with a GPS point or rebar to support repeat photography. Select areas to photograph that easily demonstrate relevant objectives (see the CNR Photo Point Monitoring app in beta testing for suggestions on how to implement).

Where additional detail and rigor is desired, metrics may be quantitatively assessed using basic forest or ecological inventory methods. Common prescribed fire effects metrics include woody fuel consumption, canopy scorch height, percent canopy scorch, and tree mortality. Long-term objectives, such as botanical response, may take months or years to express on the landscape, but can also be quantitatively assessed over time through vegetation surveys. CAL FIRE – FRAP also supports various university partnerships and can support research-grade data collection and prescribed fire monitoring upon request, given sufficient lead time.

Additional monitoring opportunities may exist with other Department programs, such as CAL FIRE Intel/Remote Sensing. Equipment such as Remote Automatic Weather Stations (RAWS) and Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) may also be of use for fire effects monitoring and may be available resources within your Unit. The collection of reliable weather data is a fundamental part of fire effects monitoring. Coordinate monitoring and research opportunities with Region, Program, and Headquarters staff.

Air quality monitoring may also be desired, as smoldering combustion can last for several days following burns in heavier fuels. As a starting point, air data is publicly available in many locations through www.fire.airnow.gov. Installation of additional air monitoring devices is possible through discussions with your local Air Pollution Control District, or by coordinating with CAL FIRE – FRAP.

Reporting

Adaptive framework only works when analysis makes its way back into future project planning. CAL FIRE units maintain reports & data for completed projects. In addition to standard communication among unit implementation personnel and Region Resource Management conference calls, Program will host regular meetings to share lessons learned & improve outcomes (e.g., annual Fuels & Rx Fire meeting). CalMAPPER remains the official repository of project geospatial data. Practitioners should strongly consider the value that pre- and post-implementation photos add.

- **Post-burn Completion Report**
- **A summary of how the burn went and how well it met short-term burn objectives**
- **This can be in the form of a unit log, narrative, or chronological report**
- **Other Activities**
- **Safety mitigation measures**
- **Rehabilitation and erosion control**

CalMapper

Ensure that project implementation data remains updated in CalMAPPER. CalMAPPER remains the official repository for project data, including acres completed by treatment type. Coordinate this through the Unit Pre-Fire Engineering, Resource Management, and Fuels/Vegetation Management personnel.

Financial Reporting

All personnel involved in the project may need to complete FC33s using the CalMAPPER Treatment Number. For more complex projects that may involve the use of contractors, lodging, meals, or other expenditures, consult local unit finance and region contracts personnel. For the more complex projects, units should consider the inclusion of a Finance Section Chief and other Finance Section personnel.

After Action

Every project affords the opportunity to learn, whether in planning, operations, finance, or project design. This may involve the analysis of a different burn prescription, a different season, and post-implementation management for invasive species control, to name a few examples. Document both successes and failures and utilize the information to inform future projects, thereby ameliorating the probability of meeting project objectives. After Action Reviews include, at a minimum:

- **After Action Review**
- **What was planned?**
- **What actually happened?**
- **Why did it happen?**
- **What can we do next time?**

While after action reviews are encouraged, they remain optional. However, this step is strongly encouraged, as this is the mechanism by which future projects can have improved outcomes.

Documentation

Documentation is a critical element to closing a project. Project files should be as complete and organized as possible. They are legal documents that will need to be accessed in the event of an investigation or review. There is also historic value as a source of empirical evidence for further land management actions. Required Documentation includes:

- **Prescribed fire plan**
- **Monitoring data**
- **Weather observations/spot weather forecasts**
- **Fire behavior**
- **Fire effects**
- **Smoke dispersal observations**
- **Weather forecasts**
- **Notifications**
- **IAP**
- **Agreements related to implementation**
- **Prescribed Fire Go/No-Go Checklist**
- **Validation of the Live Fire Use Approval**
- **Ensure CAL MAPPER reporting is completed**
- **PFIRS input completed**
- **Agency specific reports**

Completion Report

- **Burn dates**
- **Type of burn (Broadcast, pile burning, etc.)**
- **Acres treated**
- **Acres by reimbursement type**
- **Vegetation type (fuel model)**
- **Fuel consumption obtained**
- **Prescribed fire behavior**
- **Any follow up measures needed**

Optional Documentation

- **After Action Review**
- **Unit logs**
- **Press releases**
- **Actual ignition patterns and sequences**
- **Smoke management information-Air Quality NOV Reviews**
- **Agency individual fire occurrence form**
- **Detailed post-burn report**
- **CEQA documentation**
- **Permits**
- **Project cost summary**
- **Pre- and post-implementation photos (i.e., photo monitoring & presentation of outcomes)**

Administrative Duties

External Burn Permits (https://burnpermit.fire.ca.gov)

Burning is permitted and encouraged by the state legislature and CAL FIRE. The process involves an online application. Permits are required year-round in Imperial, Inyo, Los Angeles, Mono, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, Santa Barbara, and Ventura Counties (Zone A). In all other counties (Zone B), CAL FIRE permits are only required from May 1st until the Director declares that the hazardous fire conditions have abated for that year, or if the Director has declared by proclamation that unusual fire hazard conditions exist in the area. The department may issue permits for four different types of burning:

Burn Permit Options



Residential Burn Permit

This permit is intended for the disposal of the combustible or flammable vegetative material from a single- or two-family dwelling unit or residence by burning outdoors in small burn piles, no larger than 4 ft x 4 ft. Residential burning is not agricultural, including prescribed, burning.



General and Broadcast Burn Permits

General Burn (LE-5) and Broadcast Burn (LE-7/8) permits include those for large pile burning, agricultural burns, incinerators, hazardous projects that could cause a fire (such as outdoor welding), and larger controlled applications of fire to the land for fuel reduction purposes. These permits are reviewed by Unit staff and might require a site inspection.



Campfire Permits

Secure a campfire permit to enjoy responsible wilderness camping with a fire. Verify the allowed locations and adhere to safety guidelines to protect natural areas and prevent wildfire.

- Residential Burn Permit (aka LE-62a). Residential burning means the disposal of the combustible or flammable vegetative material from a single- or two-family dwelling unit or residence by burning outdoors. Residential burning is not agricultural burning. Piles may be up to a maximum size of 4'x4'x4'.
- General Burn Permit (aka LE-5). General burning includes agriculture and large pile burning (piles greater than 4'x4'x4'). Other burn activities covered by this permit include incinerator barrel burning, burning large piles, burning small piles, burning of small parcel or strips, burning of small plots of grass or weeds, or burning on vacant land. If a state agency is obtaining this permit, small pile burning is an allowed activity (a private resident should obtain a residential permit for small pile burning). This permit is also used for hazardous project work that could cause a fire (e.g., outdoor welding, grinding, metal work, hot work etc.)
- Broadcast Burn Permit (LE-7/8). Broadcast burning is the controlled application of fire to the land to reduce wildfire hazards, clear downed trees, control plant diseases, improve rangeland and wildlife habitats, and restore natural ecosystems as outlined in Public Resources Code 4491-4494. This type of burning is sometimes called a controlled burn, prescribed fire, or prescribed burning and is one of the most important tools used to manage fire today. A site visit is required before a permit is issued (except when optional pursuant to Executive Order N-35-25). Processing of the application can take up to 10 days. Project proponents should be sure to provide adequate time for this review when scheduling the project. During the site visit, project proponents may be asked for a burn plan or a contingency plan prior to burning.
- Campfire permit (LE-63). "Campfire" means a fire which is used for cooking, personal warmth, lighting, ceremonial or aesthetic purposes. This includes fires contained within outdoor fireplaces and enclosed stoves with flues or chimneys, stoves using jellied, liquid, solid, or gaseous fuels, portable barbecue pits and braziers, or space heating devices which are used outside any structure, mobile home, or living accommodation mounted on a motor vehicle. "Campfire" does not include portable lanterns designed to emit light resulting from a combustion process (PRC § 4103.5). Campfires are permitted on federal-controlled lands, state-controlled lands, and private lands owned by others. On private lands, always respect private property and obtain written permission from the landowner. Local burn restrictions may apply.

Even when permits are not required, CAL FIRE should offer guidance and assistance for prescribed fire as resources allow. This includes, but is not limited to, standby, review of a burn plan, and suggestions for ignition sequence or sufficient holding resources. When permits are issued, CAL FIRE provides advice and technical assistance to the permit holder. The issuance of a permit from CAL FIRE does not relieve the applicant from the need to obtain any other required permits or approvals from other agencies – such as those required by an Air District (See California Health and Safety Code § 13055, 39011, 41801, 42311.2).

The permit holder retains liability for the burn and may be charged for suppression cost and damages caused to the property of others if a burn escapes and is declared a wildfire.

If the Department determines control of the fire has been lost or the fire has escaped containment lines, the incident may be considered a wildfire. If this occurs, the Department will respond, assume incident command, and use its own resources and mutual aid agreements for the express purpose of containing and controlling the fire. Costs for fire suppression and investigation may later be recovered from those responsible for the escaped burn per California Health and Safety Code sections 13009 and 13009.1, except as provided for in Civil Code section 3333.8, which sets a gross negligence standard for fire suppression and investigation costs associated with prescribed fire and cultural burning that meets specific criteria.

Conclusion

Beneficial fire is an essential tool for reducing wildfire risk, increasing community resilience, supporting cultural and traditional fire practices, and maintaining healthy, fire-adapted ecosystems. As California continues to expand the use of prescribed fire, successful projects will depend upon thoughtful planning, interdisciplinary collaboration, sound operational decision-making, and a commitment to continuous learning.

Effective prescribed fire begins with identifying the right projects in the right locations. Project selection should be guided by strategic wildfire resilience objectives, ecological conditions, landowner and stakeholder interests, cultural values, and opportunities to improve long-term landscape health. Clear objectives established during project planning should inform environmental analysis, prescription development, operational planning, implementation, and post-fire evaluation.

Successful implementation requires balancing project objectives with firefighter safety, public safety, environmental stewardship, and operational feasibility. Achieving this balance depends upon strong coordination among CAL FIRE personnel, landowners, cultural fire practitioners, California Certified Prescribed Fire Burn Bosses, partner agencies, researchers, and local communities.

Prescribed fire should be viewed as a continuous management process rather than a single event. Monitoring, reporting, documentation, and after-action review provide opportunities to evaluate outcomes, identify lessons learned, and improve future projects. Information gained through implementation should be incorporated into future planning, helping refine prescriptions, operational strategies, and management approaches over time.

Appendix 1: Applicable Laws

Applicable Laws

The following Public Resources Code ("PRC"), Health and Safety Code ("HSC"), and Civil Code ("Civ. Code") sections, and any respective implementing regulations, apply to the Department's use and oversight of prescribed fire. These brief summaries are provided for ease of reference and do not constitute legal advice. The summaries are reflective of the law as it existed on January 31, 2026, and may not accurately reflect the current state of the law. Users of this guide are encouraged to read the full text of the statutes in the Public Resources Code at leginfo.legislature.ca.gov and the regulations in Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations ("CCR") at govt.westlaw.com/calregs. Users of this guide should seek legal advice from a qualified attorney for any questions about how the law applies or should be interpreted.

Public Resources Code
DIVISION 4. Forests, Forestry, and Range and Forage Lands
PART 2. Protection of Forest, Range, and Forage Lands
CHAPTER 1. Prevention and Control of Forest Fires
ARTICLE 2. General Provisions (4111-4123.8)

PRC § 4118 — Burning for fire prevention or suppression as public purpose
This section says that burning vegetation is for a public purpose if CAL FIRE has determined it is needed to prevent or fight forest fires.

Prohibited Activities

Public Resources Code
DIVISION 4. Forests, Forestry, and Range and Forage Lands
PART 2. Protection of Forest, Range, and Forage Lands
CHAPTER 6. Prohibited Activities
Article 2. Prohibited Activities (4421-4446)

PRC § 4421 – Burning on another's land prohibited without permission
This section prohibits a person from setting fire, or causing a fire to be set, on land that is not the person's own land without permission of the owner.

PRC § 4422 – Allowing a fire to burn uncontrolled or to escape prohibited
This section prohibits a person from willfully or knowingly allowing a fire to burn uncontrolled, or from allowing a fire to escape.

PRC § 4423 — Permit requirement for burning vegetation
This section makes it illegal to burn vegetation without a permit from CAL FIRE or the relevant federal agency in any state responsibility area, any area receiving fire protection from CAL FIRE by contract, or on federal lands administered by the USDA or U.S. Department of Interior at the following times:

- Year-round in high-risk counties (Zone A). [Mono, Inyo, San Bernardino, Santa Barbara, Ventura, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Diego, and Imperial Counties]
- During fire season or declared high-risk periods (Zone B). [All other counties]
    - This section also provides that CAL FIRE can suspend permits and require permittees to check before burning.

PRC § 4423.1 – Authority of certain public officers to suspend or prohibit burning
This section provides that burning under a permit may be suspended, restricted, or prohibited by a proclamation issued by the Director or the Director's designee, a county fire warden with the approval of the Director, or the federal officers directing activities within California of the BLM, National Park Service, or US Forest Service.

PRC § 4423.2 – Issuance of a restricted temporary burning permit
This section allows an officer who issues a proclamation under PRC § 4423.2 to issue a restricted temporary burning permit where the continuation of burning may be essential for public health, safety, or welfare.

PRC § 4425 – Violation rendering permit null and void
Any violation of the terms of a burn permit renders the permit null and void.

PRC § 4426 – Setting backfire without official supervision or permission
This section prohibits the setting of a backfire, except under the direct supervision or permission of a state or federal forest officer, unless it can be established that the setting of such backfire was necessary for the purpose of saving life or valuable property.

PRC §§ 4427-4431, 4442-4443 – Operation of equipment around dry vegetation
These sections regulate the use or operation of certain equipment and tools that may cause a fire.

PRC § 4435 – Fire originating from device that may kindle fire
This section provides that, if a fire originates from the operation of equipment or a device that may kindle a fire, the occurrence of the fire is prima facie evidence of negligence in the maintenance, operation, or use of the equipment or device, and imposes criminal liability on the negligent individual.

PRC §§ 4437-4441 – Disposal of flammable forest product waste
These sections provide parameters for disposing of flammable forest product waste material or residue.

Burning of Lands

Public Resources Code
DIVISION 4. Forests, Forestry, and Range and Forage Lands
PART 2. Protection of Forest, Range, and Forage Lands
CHAPTER 7. Burning of Lands
ARTICLE 2. Burning Agreements (4475 – 4483)

PRC § 4475 — Agreements for prescribed burning or other hazardous fuel reduction efforts
This section allows CAL FIRE to partner with others (private landowners, tribes, nonprofits, public agencies, etc.) to conduct prescribed burns or hazardous fuel reduction projects that benefit the public. Acceptable public benefits include wildfire prevention, watershed management, range improvement, vegetation management, forest improvement, wildlife habitat improvement, and air quality.

PRC § 4476 — Provisions and effect of prescribed-burning operation agreements
This section lays out mandatory terms for any prescribed-burn agreement, including:

- The Director of CAL FIRE has final authority to determine when burning can occur to minimize the risk of escape and facilitate maintenance of air quality.
- An officer of CAL FIRE or certified burn boss must have final authority to approve a burn plan, to determine the site, crew, and equipment are ready, and to supervise the work until the prescribed burn is declared to be out.

- There must be a clear division of duties and safety precautions.
- Personnel furnished by a person contracting with CAL FIRE must be an agent of that person for purposes of workers compensation, but volunteers recruited or used by CAL FIRE are employees of the department for purposes of workers compensation.
- Rules on insurance and liability, including options for:
- State-purchased insurance,
- Indemnification,
- Liability caps or shared responsibility.
- CAL FIRE must take full responsibility for burns it initiates for training or other purposes on lands owned by a nonprofit or other public agency.

PRC § 4477 — Burn boss training and certification
This section creates a formal burn boss certification program, including:

- Required training and continuing education.
- A statewide standard for professional burn leaders.
- Development of a proposal for a prescribed fire training center with input from various stakeholders.
- Public reporting of how many certified burn bosses exist.
- Following best practices outlined in the curriculum and certification process is treated as evidence of due diligence by burn bosses.

PRC § 4479 — Liability for suppression costs
This section clarifies that if a prescribed burn escapes, who pays fire suppression costs is governed by California Health and Safety Code section13009. It does not apply when the state is seeking federal disaster assistance.

PRC § 4480 — Contracting prescribed fire work
When CAL FIRE can't keep up with demand, this section allows the Director to contract with private consultants, contractors, or other public agencies for all or a part of the state's share of responsibility for planning the operation, preparing the site, and conducting the prescribed burning or other hazardous fuel reduction. All work must still be supervised by a burn boss or designated officer.

PRC § 4483 — Environmental review and chaparral protections
This section provides that, to the extent feasible, the California Vegetation Treatment Program Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (CalVTP PEIR) must serve as the CEQA document for prescribed fires initiated by Public Resources code section 4491, unless such fires are exempt from CEQA. It also prohibits CAL FIRE from approving vegetation treatments that would cause type conversion of chaparral and coastal sage scrub ecosystems and allows CAL FIRE to order remediation if type-conversion of chaparral or coastal sage scrub does occur.

Public Resources Code
DIVISION 4. Forests, Forestry, and Range and Forage Lands
PART 2. Protection of Forest, Range, and Forage Lands
CHAPTER 7. Burning of Lands
ARTICLE 3. Private Burning of Lands Under Permit (4491 – 4494)

PRC § 4491 — Prescribed burning is for a public purpose
This section declares that cooperation by CAL FIRE working with others on prescribed burns is for a public purpose when it supports wildfire prevention, watershed management, range improvement, vegetation management, forest improvement, wildlife habitat improvement, restoring ecological integrity and resilience, community wildfire

protection, carbon resilience, enhancement of culturally important resources, and maintenance of air quality.

It also:

- Assigns administration of burn permits to the Director or, when the Director has delegated such authority, to the chief of a county fire department in a contract county.
- Requires CAL FIRE to provide advice and standby fire protection when resources allow.

PRC § 4492 — Application for burning permit; Applicants; Form and contents
This section allows landowners or land managers in state fire responsibility areas to apply for permission to conduct prescribed burns for the public purposes listed in § 4491 and describes the required contents of an application.

PRC § 4493 — Inspection and conditions before approval
Before issuing a burn permit, CAL FIRE must:

- Inspect the site with the applicant.
- Set preparation requirements and safety precautions.
- Decide what firefighting resources are needed.

In issuing the permit, CAL FIRE must consider the availability of nondepartmental contingency resources when determining whether to require CAL FIRE contingency resources as part of the required precautions.

The department must also, to the extent feasible, implement burn suspensions at the unit level rather than the state or regional level.

PRC § 4494 — Permit issuance and due diligence
This section provides:

- CAL FIRE may issue a permit with specific safety conditions.
- Permit holders must still exercise due diligence when implementing a burn.
- Following permit conditions is evidence of due diligence.
- CAL FIRE must create an automated permitting system.

Public Resources Code
DIVISION 4. Forests, Forestry, and Range and Forage Lands
PART 2. Protection of Forest, Range, and Forage Lands
CHAPTER 7. Burning of Lands
ARTICLE 4. Air Quality and Prescribed Burns Program (4495- 4495)

PRC § 4495 — Air quality monitoring and public outreach
This section requires CAL FIRE and the Air Resources Board to develop a program to improve smoke and air-quality monitoring, and provide public awareness of prescribed burns.

Public Resources Code
DIVISION 4. Forests, Forestry, and Range and Forage Lands
PART 2. Protection of Forest, Range, and Forage Lands
CHAPTER 7. Burning of Lands
ARTICLE 4.3. Burning with Cooperators (4497-4497.2)

PRC § 4497 — Burning with Cooperators

This section allows CAL FIRE to enter into agreements to conduct joint prescribed burning operations that serve the public interest and are beneficial to the state. The agreement must establish guidelines for the cooperative management of joint prescribed burns and require the completion of a project agreement for each prescribed burn, that includes all of the following:

- A list of participants,
- A joint prescribed burn plan,
- Cost-sharing details,
- A summary of benefits to be received by each participant.

PRC § 4497.2 — Approved purposes for burning with Cooperators

This section provides that, to be considered for the public interest and beneficial to the state, each joint prescribed burn must be for one or more following purposes:

- Prevention of high-intensity wildland fires through reduction of the volume and continuity of wildland fuels.
- Watershed management.
- Range improvement.
- Vegetation management.
- Forest improvement.
- Wildlife habitat improvement.
- Air quality maintenance.

Public Resources Code
DIVISION 4. Forests, Forestry, and Range and Forage Lands
PART 2. Protection of Forest, Range, and Forage Lands
CHAPTER 7. Burning of Lands
ARTICLE 4.4. Prescribed Fire Liability Pilot Program (4500 – 4503)

PRC § 4500 — Prescribed Fire Liability Pilot Program

This section creates a state-backed claims fund to cover losses from prescribed burns and cultural burns conducted by non-government actors.

Key features:

- Up to $2 million per burn.
- Applies only if the burn followed the approved plans and permits.
- Administered by CAL FIRE or a third-party administrator.
- Limits the state's total liability to money in the fund.
- Requires respect for tribal sovereignty and cultural practices.
- Sunsets January 1, 2028.

Public Resources Code
DIVISION 4. Forests, Forestry, and Range and Forage Lands
PART 2. Protection of Forest, Range, and Forage Lands
CHAPTER 10. Protection of Forest and Lands
ARTICLE 8. Wildland Fire Prevention and Vegetation Management (4740 – 4743)

PRC § 4740 — Legislative findings

This section explains that the legislature has found that:

- CAL FIRE has expertise that can reduce wildfire risk.
- Local governments need help with vegetation management.
- Sharing state expertise benefits everyone.

PRC § 4741 — Assistance to local governments

This section authorizes CAL FIRE to advise cities, counties, and special districts on wildfire prevention and fuels management.

- Makes clear that this advice is optional, not mandatory.
- Preserves local governments' existing legal responsibilities and liabilities.

Liability in Relation to Fires

Health and Safety Code
DIVISION 12. Fires and Fire Protection
PART 1. General Provisions
Chapter 1. Liability in Relation to Fires

HSC § 13000 – Escaping Fires

Any person who allows a fire to escape or spread to the lands of another without using every reasonable and proper precaution to prevent the fire from escaping is guilty of a misdemeanor.

HSC § 13001 – Throwing flaming or glowing substances; Operating welding torches

Any person who, through careless or negligent action, places anything that may start a fire in a place where it may start a fire, or who uses equipment that may start a fire without taking the reasonable precautions necessary to insure against the starting or spreading of fire, is guilty of a misdemeanor.

HSC § 13007 – Liability for fire-caused damages

Any person who willfully, negligently, or in violation of law, sets a fire on, or allows a fire to escape to, another's property is liable to the owner of the property for any damages to the property caused by the fire.

HSC § 13008 – Liability for escaping fires

Any person who allows any fire burning on his property to escape to the property of another without exercising due diligence to control the fire is liable to the property-owner for any damages to the property caused by the fire.

HSC § 13009-13009.6 – Liability for fire suppression, investigation costs

These sections provide that any person, with certain exceptions, who negligently, or in violation of the law, sets a fire or allows a fire to be set or escape on any property is liable for fire suppression, investigation, and certain costs incurred in fighting the fire and for providing rescue or emergency services, and for certain pecuniary damages.

Civil Code
DIVISION 4. General Provisions
PART 1. Relief
Title 2. Compensatory Relief
Chapter 2. Measure of Damages
Article 2. Damages for Wrongs

Civ. Code § 3333.8 – Immunity for prescribed burn

No person shall be liable for fire suppression costs or other costs recoverable pursuant to Section 13009 or 13009.1 of the Health and Safety Code resulting from a prescribed fire if specific conditions are met, unless the person's conduct with respect to prescribed fire constituted gross negligence.

Appendix 2: Risk Management

Risk Management

Prescribed fire should be assessed in terms of values that could be impacted, how severe the threat may be, and the likelihood of undesirable effects. Actions should be developed to minimize or eliminate threats and manage risk. Risk management is the process whereby management decisions are made and actions taken concerning control of hazards and acceptance of remaining risk. The risk management process identified in the Incident Response Pocket Guide, PMS 461 (National Wildfire Coordinating Group, 2025), helps identify, evaluate, and mitigate time-sensitive risks and hazards associated with prescribed fire.

Risk management consists of mitigation strategies and implementation activities to improve outcomes and minimize negative consequences. For prescribed fire, the risk assessment is accomplished by completing an analysis process that identifies, analyzes, and characterizes the potential hazards, threats, causes, and consequences. The analysis process identifies critical items, mitigation measures, and implementation actions to be addressed in the prescribed fire plan and will acknowledge any remaining unmitigated risk in the final rating.

During the implementation phase of prescribed fires, personnel may encounter uncertain and dynamic conditions, where they must continuously evaluate risks with an eye towards maintaining a safe working environment, meeting the prescribed fire objectives (on time, within budget and with available resources) and addressing social and political concerns.

The risk management process identified in the *Incident Response Pocket Guide, PMS 461 (National Wildfire Coordinating Group, 2010)*, helps identify, evaluate and mitigate time-sensitive risks and hazards associated with prescribed fire.

Include a Prescribed Fire IIPP-2 (Job Hazard Analysis), IIPP-3 (Code of Safe Practices), and IIPP-6 (Employee Training Sign-up Sheet) into the documentation package.

Appendix 3: Shared Liability

Shared Liability

CAL FIRE has determined a process for assessing and scoring how much liability CAL FIRE is willing to accept for cooperative prescribed fire projects (see worksheet below and table 2 on page 39).

CAL FIRE Prescribed Fire Project Liability Ranking Process

Follow steps 1 through 5 below to determine the CAL FIRE share of the liability for the project.

STEP							
	CAL FIRE Involvement Value (up to 6 total cumulative)			**CAL FIRE Rx Fire Project Complexity Analysis**			
	Planning only	1		Criteria	Scale	Score	Project Related Comments
1	Operational*	2		Assets at Risk	0-8		
	Burn Boss	3		Escape Potential	0-5		
	SCORE (1-6)			Equipment/Personnel Needs	0-8		
				Burn Duration	0-3		
				Fire Behavior	0-5		
	Complexity Analysis Value^			Watershed Values	0-3		
	Low (0-25)	1	------>	Habitat Values	0-3		
2	Medium (25-45)	3	<------	Post Fire Effects	0-5		
	High (45-60)	6		Air Quality	0-5		
	SCORE (1-6)			Safety Concerns	0-5		
				Cooperators/Stakeholders	0-5		
				Community Support	0-5		
	FRAP Fire Hazard Severity Value# (up to 6 total)						
	Low	1		**Total Score (60 possible)**			
3	Moderate	3					
	High	5		*Use the above complexity analysis worksheet to obtain a score that can be used in the box for step 2 to determine the complexity analysis value.*			
	Very high	6					
	SCORE (1-6)						
	CAL FIRE Unit Priority Value						
	Low	1					
4	Medium	3		**CAL FIRE Liability Determination**			
	High	6		**Value Total**	**Liability Share**		
	SCORE (1-6)			4-11	25%		
				12-15	50%		
5	**Value Total (4-24)**		------>	16-19	75%		
		Add steps 1 - 4.		20-24	100%		

* = operational involvement requires A-Rep

^ = uses CAL FIRE Rx Fire Complexity Analysis

= Fire hazard severity based on FRAP classification.

Instructions: The worksheet shown above is available as an MS Excel file. It should be filled in and kept for each project. CAL FIRE Legal must review liability determinations before projects are implemented. The Director may use his/her discretion to accept more or less liability on any project. Note the Steps listed on the left of the spreadsheet.

- For Step 1, the score should indicate the cumulative total of the three levels of involvement by CAL FIRE. For example, if CAL FIRE will only be involved in planning and will provide some holding resources, the total would be 3.
- For Step 2, the user will use the complexity analysis table. See the project complexity analysis in the table below with instructions in the chart that follows it.

- For Step 3, the user will note what FRAP Fire Hazard Severity Zone much of the project falls into (see: http://frap.fire.ca.gov/projects/hazard/fhz). The corresponding score from the table will be assigned.
- For Step 4, the local CAL FIRE Unit Chief or designee will assign the priority score as he/she sees fit using local knowledge and expertise.
- Step 5 totals the scores in the other 4 steps and uses the "CAL FIRE Liability Determination" table to assign the acceptable CAL FIRE share of liability for the project.

It is important to note that CAL FIRE Legal may review agreements and over-ride the liability determination if they find that there are other circumstances that need to be considered, or that the liability analysis should be redone. Below is the table CAL FIRE utilizes for cooperative prescribed fire project complexity analysis as it relates to liability. Some criteria are weighed differently than others. This is by design. Primarily, this is due to two factors:

1) CAL FIRE has different objectives than other agencies, as set out in law and policy, and
2) CAL FIRE rarely burns on property it owns or manages.

For cooperative burns, a preliminary complexity analysis rating is required early in the prescribed fire plan development process to determine how much liability CAL FIRE is willing to accept for a project. The preliminary complexity analysis encourages early line officer engagement in the identification of values and the assessment of prescribed fire implementation risk to those values. It will help identify potential concerns that may be mitigated during the prescribed fire plan preparation. Local knowledge and judgment are important components of the preliminary complexity analysis.

Within the larger table, is the following project complexity analysis table that bears its own instructions (in the table 2 below it):

Table 2: CAL FIRE RX Fire Project Complexity Analysis

CAL FIRE Rx Fire Project Complexity Analysis			
Criteria	Scale	Score	Project Related Comments
Assets at Risk	0-8		
Escape Potential	0-5		
Equipment/Personnel Needs	0-8		
Burn Duration	0-3		
Fire Behavior	0-5		
Watershed Values	0-3		
Habitat Values	0-3		
Post Fire Effects	0-5		
Air Quality	0-5		
Safety Concerns	0-5		
Cooperators/Stakeholders	0-5		
Social Factors	0-5		
Total Score (60 possible)			

See the table 3 below for descriptions of each criterion.

Table 3: Descriptions of complexity scores

Complexity Analysis Value	Scale	Description
Assets at Risk	0-8	0 = No assets at risk, 4 = Some assets at risk like power lines or other infrastructure, 8 = Houses and community near the burn area.
Escape Potential/Technical Difficulty	0-5	0 = No Escape Potential, 3 = Moderate escape potential, topography issues, weather or control lines. 5=High escape potential, such erratic weather or poor control lines.
Equipment/Personnel Needs	0-8	0 = No Equipment/Personnel Needs, 5 = Moderate equipment/personnel needs, diverse topography or multiple control lines. 8=High equipment/personnel needs, large diverse and complex project area with many resources required for a successful burn.
Burn Duration	0-3	The length of time (hours, days or weeks) that active ignition, fire spread and primary holding operations (critical holding points are secure, transitioning to mop- up and patrol etc.) are expected to occur to fully implement the prescribed fire. 0 = less than one day, 1 = one full day, 2 = between one and three days, 3 = more than three days.
Fire Behavior	0-5	0-1 =Fire behavior is going to be on the low side of the target prescription, 2-3 = On target prescription, 4-5 = On the upper end of the target prescription.
Watershed Values	0-3	Is it an impacted watershed or not?
Habitat Values	0-3	Especially for species of concern (listed, threatened, endangered, etc.). Should be based on a CNDDB search to see if the area has occurrences of such species.
Post Fire Effects	0-5	Are harmful effects of wildfire present? May consider if a WERT or equivalent was deployed in the area in the past 10 years.
Air Quality	0-5	Air basin impacts, if the air basin is a impacted already for pollutants or not.
Safety Concerns	0-5	Overarching concerns specific to the project.
Cooperators/Stakeholders	0-5	Based on previous project successes.
Community Support	0-5	Critical need for vulnerable communities.

Appendix 4: Go/No Go Checklist

LIVE FIRE USE - GO/NO GO CHECKLIST (8100)

PROJECT NAME:_____ PROJECT NUMBER: _____

YES NO

☐ ☐ 1. Current conditions are within minimum/maximum prescription criteria

Burn Block #	ACCEPTABLE FIRE BEHAVIOR RANGE		
Time:	MIN	Observed	MAX
Wind Direction			
Wind Speed			
Relative Humidity %			
Live Fuel %			
Probability of ignition (%)			
Other			

☐ ☐ 2. Spot forecast(s) have been received and reviewed. No adverse weather conditions or changes are expected.

☐ ☐ 3. Applicable permits have been issued and the project complies with all requirements of the permits.

☐ ☐ 4. Personnel and equipment required in the IAP are in position.

☐ ☐ 5. All personnel have been briefed on the IAP.

☐ ☐ 6. Backup and support resources are available in strength needed to contain escapes within the burning period.

☐ ☐ 7. Notifications have been made.
- ☐ Adjacent landowner(s)
- ☐ News Media
- ☐ Unit ECC and Region Duty Chief
- ☐ Lookouts and Air Attack Bases (summer only)
- ☐ A.P.C.D. or A.Q.M.D
- ☐ Other: _____

☐ ☐ 8. Is a test burn required? If yes, go to #9. If no, go to #10

☐ ☐ 9. A test plot has been burned satisfactorily

☐ ☐ 10. Has a "NO" box been checked (other than #8)?
IF "NO" **BEGIN PRESCRIBED FIRE OPERATION**
IF "YES" GO TO #11

☐ ☐ 11. Can the plan be modified or action taken to rectify the situation?
IF "NO" **DO NOT BURN**
IF "YES" Describe plan change and/or action taken:_____

☐ ☐ 12. Did the Unit Chief (or Duty Chief) approve the changes?
Method of contact: ☐ Radio ☐ Phone ☐ Personal Contact

Burn Boss Signature: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____

ADVISE UNIT ECC OF DECISION WHEN CHECKLIST IS COMPLETE
BURN BOSS TO RETAIN CHECKLIST FOR RECORDS