



## GUIDELINE 411 FHRP FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **What Is The Fire Hazard Reduction Program?**

The Fire Hazard Reduction Program, commonly referred to as “FHRP”, is the cornerstone of our [Wildland Fire Action Plan](#). Property owners included in the program are expected to maintain their property free of hazards or nuisance vegetation year-round. Common requirements are 100’ feet of vegetation clearance from structures and 10’ feet for road access. The goal is to maintain trees and vegetation, and to remove or reduce hazardous vegetation that provides a combustible fuel supply for wildfire. This defensible space aids our firefighters by giving them a tactical advantage in stopping a fire and saving lives and properties. Dry, volatile fuel and poorly maintained vegetation creates an extreme fire danger by spreading wildfires. Well-placed and well-maintained vegetation can beautify and control erosion.

### **Who benefits from the FHRP Program?**

Property owners, their neighbors, and the Fire District all benefit from the FHRP program. The FHRP program is designed to minimize fire danger by controlling the density and placement of flammable vegetation. The FHRP program allows firefighters to work in a safer environment and structures are better protected from wildland fire. Suppression efforts can be achieved as a partnership.

### **I have no structure on my property, why do I get a notice?**

The notice states you shall clear 100 feet from all structures, this includes the neighboring structures. Each property owner is responsible to provide the required fire hazard clearance only within the boundaries of their property, regardless of which property the structure may be located.

- Example: The property line is located 60 feet away from the house on Parcel A and there is no structure on the adjacent property Parcel B. The owner of Parcel A needs to provide 60 feet of clearance from the structure up to the property line that is on Parcel A. The owner of Parcel B is required to provide the remaining 40 feet of clearance on Parcel B from the structure on Parcel A for a total of 100 feet of clearance.

### **How do I determine where my parcel or the property lines are located?**

There are several ways to obtain this information. Common tools are [Assessor Parcel Maps](#), Recorded Tract Maps, Title reports and on-line GIS mapping. The County GIS has a public access aerial mapping application available at [gis.ventura.org/countyview/](http://gis.ventura.org/countyview/). Some recorded maps are also available via this mapping program.

## **What are the reasons a parcel is included in the FHRP Program?**

Typical reasons are:

- There is natural vegetation on the property within 100 feet of a structure
- Parcels with a Fuel Modification Zone (FMZ) (e.g. Open Space or Homeowners Association (HOA) landscape areas)
- Parcels with natural vegetation within 100' ft of a structure AND is located in
  - State Responsible Area (SRA)
  - Local Responsible Area (LRA) Very High Fire Severity Zone
  - Ventura County - Hazardous Fire Area (HFA) includes any location within 500' feet of a forest or brush, grass, or grain covered land
- The property is located near open space areas and there is ornamental landscaping that is required to be maintained. This would mainly be properties subject to embers or flame front from wildland fires
- Parcels with specific development mitigation measures (e.g. conditions for development specify an increase beyond 100' feet)

## **Is the ornamental landscaping on my property subject to clearance requirements?**

Yes, all vegetation, including ornamental landscaping, is subject to the requirements of State and Local laws regarding planting location, clearance and maintenance. Keep ornamental landscaping properly irrigated and free of dead material. Many of the homes consumed in wildland fires have been due to lack of maintenance and improper placement of ornamental landscaping.

## **Isn't my Homeowners Association (HOA) responsible for the weed abatement?**

We understand that there may be a Homeowners Association (HOA) completing the required fire hazard clearance on your parcel, however we are required by State Law to send the "Abatement Notice" to the actual property owner, not to who has an agreement to do the clearance. As long as the HOA continues to complete the clearance work by the deadline, there should be no further action required by the actual property owner. We have advised the property management companies to notify their associations of this information.

## **Will I be fined as indicated on the Notice?**

There is no charge to the property owner if you complete your required clearance work by the deadline. We want the property owner to complete the required clearance. It is not the intention of the Fire District to abate parcels. If the abatement work is not done by the approved deadline the Fire District's contractor will do the clearance work and the cost of clearance plus an administrative fee will be attached to the property as a special assessment lien.

## **Can I get an extension from the clearance deadline?**

June 1<sup>st</sup> is our deadline. Long term extensions are not granted. The longer the hazard remains on the property the longer it is a risk to the nearby structures and the community. If you have started your work, but need some extra time, you can contact the Fire Station at the phone number listed on the notice, to request a few days to complete the work. Fire Stations personnel may work with you as long as the work is done in a timely manner.

## **How can I find out if my parcel has been approved for the year?**

If you would like to see if your parcel has been approved and to obtain a Receipt of Approval, please visit [vcfhrp.org](http://vcfhrp.org). Parcel approval information is updated each morning. Local fire stations normally

start property inspections the last week in May and into June. It may take several weeks to complete all inspections due to emergency calls and number of assigned inspections.

### **What are the legal requirements for the FHRP program?**

California Public Resource Code (PRC) and the California Government Code (GC) require property owners to maintain their property free from fire hazards that can endanger lives, structures and property. The reference sections are PRC 4291 and GC 51175 - 51189. California Health & Safety Code (H&S) provides for public hearing, notices and abatement processes. Fire District Ordinance requires additional clearance and authorizes the Fire District to abate the fire hazard if not completed by the property owner by the deadline given. For a copy of the current Ordinance, please visit [VCFD.org](http://VCFD.org) and click on the Fire Prevention tab.

### **Will I receive Notices every year?**

Yes, property owners in the FHRP Program will receive an abatement notice in April each year with a clearance deadline of June 1st. The annual notice serves a reminder for property owners to clear their parcel of any hazards. Note: Owners may get an additional Notice to Abate Fire Hazard later in the year if the Fire Station requires the re-growth of vegetation to be removed during the year.

### **What should I do if I no longer own the parcel?**

If you are no longer the owner of the property identified in the notice, notify the Ventura County Assessor's Office at (805) 654-2282 and the Fire District's FHRP Office at [FHRP@ventura.org](mailto:FHRP@ventura.org) or (805) 389-9759. If you sell the property, failure to disclose this legal notice to the new owner may make you liable for hazard abatement charges assessed to the property. The Fire District uses parcel owner information as shown on the latest Assessment Roll. It can take 2-6 weeks for the County Assessor to update the assessment roll after a property transfers ownership.

### **What if I am physically unable or I cannot afford to do the clearance work?**

While this may be a difficult situation for yourself, we cannot let the hazard remain that affects your property and the surrounding community. We recommend you ask family and friends to help. You can also contact local service organizations that provide assistance to their communities. If this situation occurs, contact the local fire station with status of the property clearance.

### **Why does my tax bill list a "VCFD Weed Abatement" charge?**

When parcels are abated by the Fire District, the contractor charges and a Fire District administrative fee are placed on the tax bill for collection by the Tax Collector. If you have questions regarding this charge, please contact the FHRP Unit at (805) 389-9759 or email at [fhpr@ventura.org](mailto:fhpr@ventura.org). We can only discuss concerns or complaints regarding the charges for abatement with the actual property owner or their authorized representative.

### **How do I speak to someone about my parcel?**

If you have any additional questions regarding your parcel, please contact your local fire station at the phone number listed on the bottom of your notice or call the FHRP Office at (805) 389-9759.

### **How do I report a concern regarding a possible fire hazard on a property?**

If the concern is regarding vegetation on the property, you can contact your local fire station (805) 371-1111 or email [fhpr@ventura.org](mailto:fhpr@ventura.org). For possible fire hazard concerns not involving vegetation, please contact the Fire Prevention public counter (805) 389-9738 or email [fireprevention@ventura.org](mailto:fireprevention@ventura.org). If the property in question is located within an incorporated city and is

not included in the FHRP program, your concern would best be handled by the city code enforcement agency.

### **Do I need an inspection when I sell my parcel?**

Under Assembly Bill 38 (2019), effective July 1, 2021, sellers of residential properties located in a State mapped High or Very-High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (FHSZ) are required to provide the buyer a report from the local fire department that shows the parcel is in compliance with State and/or Local Laws regarding defensible space. For more information about this requirement, please visit [www.vcfd.org/ab38](http://www.vcfd.org/ab38).

### **Advisory Notice.**

Assembly Bill 3074 (2019) has implemented a new 0 to 5-foot ember resistant zone (Zone 0) around buildings subject to Defensible Space Laws and Regulations. This includes any building located in a State mapped Very-High, High, or Moderate Fire Hazard Severity Zone. The new Zone 0 will be effective January 1, 2023, for new buildings and January 1, 2024, for existing buildings. While formal requirements for this zone have not been issued by the State, recommended items are listed in [VCFD Guideline 418 – Defensible Space](#) available at [www.vcfd.org](http://www.vcfd.org). It is highly recommend that any new landscaping be installed such that it will not be subject to modification and/or removal when Zone 0 goes into effect.

### **Landscape Plans.**

Installation of new landscape is the starting point to make sure correct plants are selected and proper spacing is provided and maintained. This requires review and approval of landscape plans by the Fire Department, along with other agencies having jurisdiction over the property. Please see [VCFD Guideline 416 – Landscape Plans](#) available at [www.vcfd.org](http://www.vcfd.org) to determine when a landscape review is required. All new landscaping shall comply with [VCFD Standard 515 – Defensible Space and Fuel Modification Zone](#) requirements.

### **Where can I get more information regarding plantings, guidelines, etc...?**

Additional information regarding the FHRP Program and wildland fire safety can be found on the Fire District website at [www.vcfd.org](http://www.vcfd.org), by email: [FHRP@ventura.org](mailto:FHRP@ventura.org) or by phone at (805) 389-9759.

