

SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA



ITEM: 3.33  
(ID # 27809)

MEETING DATE:  
Tuesday, June 10, 2025

FROM : FIRE DEPARTMENT

SUBJECT: FIRE DEPARTMENT: Initiation of a new Ordinance, Relating to the Adoption of the Fire Hazard Severity Zone Maps in the Local Responsibility Areas. All Districts [\$7,000 General Fund 52%, Structural Fire Taxes 46%, Fees 2%]

RECOMMENDED MOTION: That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Adopt an order to Initiate a new Ordinance, which adopts the recommended Fire Hazard Severity Zone Maps for Riverside County; and
2. Direct the Fire Department and County Counsel to prepare and process this ordinance.

ACTION:


  
Bill Weiser, Fire Department Chief 5/19/2025

---

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

On motion of Supervisor Gutierrez, seconded by Supervisor Washington and duly carried by unanimous vote, IT WAS ORDERED that the above matter is approved as recommended.

Ayes: Medina, Spiegel, Washington, Perez and Gutierrez  
Nays: None  
Absent: None  
Date: June 10, 2025  
xc: Fire

Kimberly A. Rector  
Clerk of the Board  
By:   
Deputy

**SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE,  
STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

<b>FINANCIAL DATA</b>	<b>Current Fiscal Year:</b>	<b>Next Fiscal Year:</b>	<b>Total Cost:</b>	<b>Ongoing Cost</b>
<b>COST</b>	\$ 7,000	\$ 0	\$ 7,000	\$ 0
<b>NET COUNTY COST</b>	\$ 3,640	\$ 0	\$ 3,640	\$ 0
<b>SOURCE OF FUNDS:</b> General Fund 52%, Fees 2%, Structural Fire Taxes 46%			<b>Budget Adjustment:</b> No	
			<b>For Fiscal Year:</b> 24/25	

**C.E.O. RECOMMENDATION:** Approve

**BACKGROUND:**

**Summary**

Previously the Fire Hazard Severity Zone Maps within the Local Responsibility Areas (LRA) were adopted as part of the fire code adoption, Riverside County Ordinance No. 787, current legislation requires these maps to be adopted separately.

Fire Hazard Severity Zone (FHSZ) classification in the Local Responsibility Areas (LRA) were established with AB 337 in 1992 in response to the Panorama and Tunnel Fires. From 2008 to 2011, California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) worked to designate areas as Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones (VHFHSZ) within the LRA. During this time local government was able to adopt the maps as recommended or adjust the recommendation to be more or less restrictive.

In 2021 SB 63 expanded the scope of FHSZ classifications by mandating the identification of additional zones, including Moderate and High Fire Hazard Severity Zones, in addition to the Very High. In 2022, AB 211, as codified in Government Code section 51179, reinforced these mandates and required local agencies to formally designate, by ordinance, all three classifications within 120 days of receiving the recommendations for the State Fire Marshal. The bill also eliminated the local governments' ability to downgrade the hazard levels recommended by the State Fire Marshal.

The classification of FHSZ in California has evolved significantly over the past several decades in response to the increasing threat of wildfires. The State of California, through the Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) and in collaboration with local jurisdictions, has developed a systematic approach to identifying and classifying areas based on their wildfire hazard potential.

Fire Hazard Severity Zones are designated based on the likelihood of fire occurring and its expected behavior over a 30- to 50-year period. These zones are determined using factors such as fuel loading, terrain, fire weather conditions, historical fire activity, and wind patterns.

The previous FHSZ maps in California were developed and adopted by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) to identify areas at significant risk of wildfires. These maps, which classify zones as moderate, high, or very high fire hazard severity, were originally created using fire history, topography, vegetation, and climate data. They were first implemented in 2007 for State Responsibility Areas (SRA), where CAL FIRE has primary jurisdiction, and later incorporated into Local Responsibility Areas (LRA) through local government planning and building regulations. The adoption of these maps played a crucial role

**SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE,  
STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

in guiding land-use decisions, establishing building codes, and informing mitigation efforts to reduce wildfire risks. However, as fire behavior has evolved due to climate change, prolonged drought, and increased development in wildland-urban interface (WUI) areas, the need for updated maps has become evident to ensure accurate risk assessments and effective fire prevention strategies.

The designation of FHSZ under Government Code section 51178 requires local agencies to engage in a transparent and participatory process to ensure that affected communities have access to updated wildfire hazard information. The updated FHSZ maps were released on March 24, 2025, triggering the requirement for local agencies to make this information available for public review and comment within 30 days of receipt.

In compliance with this requirement, these maps have been posted on Riverside County Fire Department's website for public access and review. Additionally, they are being presented before you today during this presentation to facilitate discussion, provide clarification, and gather input from both the Board of Supervisors and the community. This ensures transparency and encourages informed community engagement in the wildfire hazard designation process

**Impact on Residents and Businesses**

For local governments, these classifications have significant implications, including:

- **Building Code Requirements:** California's Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) building codes (CBC Chapter 7A) apply to new construction within designated High and Very High FHSZs.
- **Defensible Space Standards:** Properties within these zones must maintain 100 feet of defensible space around structures, per Government Code section 51182.
- **Land Use and Planning Considerations:** Local agencies must incorporate FHSZ designations into their general plans, zoning ordinances, and emergency response strategies.
- **Real Estate Disclosures:** Property owners within these zones are required to provide wildfire hazard disclosures and defensible space inspections during property transactions.

**Additional Fiscal Information**

The estimated costs of preparing, processing, and implementing this ordinance is \$7,000, which is included in the Fire Department budget. No additional funding is requested. Any additional costs associated with newly required services due to the Ordinance will be funded with Fire Department fees already established.

SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE,  
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

*Geoff Pemberton*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Geoff Pemberton, Chief Deputy County Fire

5/16/2025

*George Trindle*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
George Trindle, Chief ASST COUNTY COUNSEL

5/21/2025

*Rebecca S Cortez*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Rebecca S Cortez, Principal Management Analyst

5/29/2025