General Plan Safety Element Assessment Tier 2

[DATE]

Board of Forestry and Fire Protection

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Purpose and Background: The State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection (Board) is required to review and make recommendations for the safety element of general plan updates in accordance with Government Code (GC) 65302.5. The review and recommendations apply to those general plans with State Responsibility Area (SRA) (Public Resources Code (PRC) 4125) or Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone Local Responsibility Area (VHFHSZ LRA) (GC 51177(i), PRC 4125).

The statutory requirements for the Board review and recommendations pursuant to GC 65302.5 (a)(1) and (2), and (b) are as follows:

- “The draft elements...to the fire safety element of a county’s or a city’s general plan...shall be submitted to the Board at least 90 days prior to...the adoption or amendment to the safety element of its general plan [for each county or city with SRA or VHFHSZ].”

- “The Board shall...review the draft or an existing safety element and report its written recommendations to the planning agency within 60 days of its receipt of the draft or existing safety element....”

- “Prior to adoption of the draft element..., the Board of Supervisors...shall consider the recommendations made by the Board...If the Board of Supervisors...determines not to accept all or some of the recommendations..., the Board of Supervisors...shall communicate in writing to the Board its reasons for not accepting the recommendations.”

Methodology for Review and Recommendations: The Board established a standardized method to review the safety element of general plans. The methodology includes 1) examining the safety element for inclusion of factors that are important for mitigation of wildfire hazard and risks, and 2) making recommendations related to these factors. The evaluation factors and recommendations below were developed using CAL FIRE technical documents and input from local fire departments.

The Tier 2 recommendations below apply to communities with
- Medium amounts of VHFHSZ Zone acreage or 10 to 20% of acreage is VHFHSZ LRA; or
- Medium population densities; or
- VHFHSZ that does not encroach on population centers or does not add significantly to contiguous high fire hazard fuels at a regional level.

The counties assigned Safety Element Assessment Tier 2 are Colusa, Imperial, Inyo, Kings, Merced, Modoc, and Mono. There are 48 cities, listed below, evaluated under Tier 2.

As local fuels, boundaries, populations, and other variables change throughout time, Board staff have the discretion to re-assign a jurisdiction into a lower or higher assessment tier. Staff will consider:

- Variations in population and population density; or
- Changes in proportion of land designated VHFHSZ (lower or higher); or
- Firefighting capabilities (paid, volunteer, equipment, etc) and contract changes; or
- Past planning efforts and involvement of organizations such as local Fire Safe Councils and new initiatives or efforts that have emerged over time; or
- Changes to the context of VHFHSZ within the region – does the VHFHSZ in a jurisdiction combine with neighboring fuels to create a continual pattern of very high fire risk in a way that it hadn’t previously?

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Review Process and Timeline

The county/local jurisdiction and CAL FIRE Land Use Planning staff will receive and review technical guidance documents, the Board assessment, and relevant information from CAL FIRE and the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research.

The county or local jurisdiction will work closely with CAL FIRE Land Use Planning staff during the development of the general plan and the safety element in particular.

At least 90 days prior to the adoption or amendment of the General Plan: The county or local jurisdiction will submit the safety element to the Board of Forestry & Fire Protection for review. Jurisdictions are encouraged to send safety elements to the Board prior to the 90 day statutory requirement for greater collaboration.

No more than 60 days later: The Board will consider staff recommendations and approve as-is or with changes at the next Board meeting. This deadline may be modified upon mutual agreement between Board staff and local jurisdictions.
Standard List of General Plan Safety Element Recommendations

Please click on the appropriate box to “check” whether the plan satisfies each point. Standard recommendations are included in the checklist but please highlight or add additional comments as necessary.

1.0 Inter-agency Wildfire Protection Planning

1.1 General Plan references and incorporates County or Unit Fire Plan: ☐Yes ☐Partial ☐No

**Recommendation:** Identify, reference or create (if necessary) a fire plan for the geographic scope of the General Plan. The General Plan should incorporate the general concepts and standards from any county fire plan, fire protection agency (federal or state) fire plan, and local hazard mitigation plan. Identify or reference the local Unit Fire Plan and, if applicable, the Community Wildfire Prevention Plan.

**Priority:** ☐High ☐Medium ☐Low ☐N/A

**Recommendation:** Ensure fire plans incorporated by reference into the General Plan contain evaluations of fire hazards, assessment of assets at risk, prioritization of hazard mitigation actions, and implementation and monitoring components.

**Priority:** ☐High ☐Medium ☐Low ☐N/A

1.2 Map or describe existing emergency service facilities and areas lacking services, specifically noting any areas in SRA or VHFHSZs. ☐Yes ☐Partial ☐No

**Recommendation:** Include descriptions of emergency services including available equipment, personnel, and maps of facility locations.

**Priority:** ☐High ☐Medium ☐Low ☐N/A

**Recommendation:** Initiate studies and analyses to identify appropriate staffing levels and equipment needs commensurate with the current and projected emergency response environment.

**Priority:** ☐High ☐Medium ☐Low ☐N/A

**Recommendation:** Establish goals and policies for emergency service training that meets or exceeds state or national standards.

**Priority:** ☐High ☐Medium ☐Low ☐N/A

1.3 Inter-fire service coordination preparedness/mutual aid and multi-jurisdictional fire service agreements. ☐Yes ☐Partial ☐No

**Recommendation:** Adopt the Standardized Emergency Management Systems for responding to large scale disasters requiring a multi-agency response. Ensure and review mutual aid/automatic aid and other cooperative agreements with adjoining emergency service providers.
2.0 **Land Use:**

2.1 Disclose wildland urban interface hazards including Fire Hazard Severity Zones designations and other vulnerable areas as determined by CAL FIRE or fire prevention organizations. Describe or map any Firewise Communities or other firesafe communities as determined by the National Fire Protection Association, Fire Safe Council, or other organizations. ☐ Yes ☐ Partial ☐ No

**Recommendation:** Specify whether the entity has a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones (VHFHSZ) designation pursuant GC 51175 and include a map of the zones that clearly indicates any area designated VHFHSZ.

**Priority:** ☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low ☐ N/A

**Recommendation:** Adopt CAL FIRE recommended Fire Hazard Severity Zones including model ordinances developed by the Office of the State Fire Marshal for establishing VHFHSZ areas.

**Priority:** ☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low ☐ N/A

2.2 Goals and policies include mitigation of fire hazard for future development. ☐ Yes ☐ Partial ☐ No

**Recommendation:** Adopt fire safe development codes to be used as standards for fire protection for new development in Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones (VHFHSZ) within the entity’s jurisdiction that meet or exceed statewide standards in 14 California Code of Regulations Section 1270 et seq. and have them certified by the Board of Forestry.

**Priority:** ☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low ☐ N/A

**Recommendation:** Establish goals and policies for specific ordinances, or specify the current existing ordinances, code sections, or regulations, that address evacuation and emergency vehicle access; water supplies and fire flow; fuel modification for defensible space; and home addressing and signing.

**Priority:** ☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low ☐ N/A

**Recommendation:** Consider mitigation of previously developed areas that do not meet Title14 California Code of Regulations Section 1270 et seq. or equivalent local ordinance.

**Priority:** ☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low ☐ N/A

2.3 The design and location of new development provides for adequate infrastructure for the safe ingress of emergency response vehicles and simultaneously allows civilian egress during an emergency: ☐ Yes ☐ Partial ☐ No
**Recommendation:** Develop pre-plans for fire prone areas that address civilian evacuations to temporary safety locations.
*Priority:* □ High □ Medium □ Low □ N/A

**Recommendation:** Develop a policy that approval of parcel maps and tentative maps is conditional based on meeting regulations adopted pursuant to §4290 and 4291 of the Public Resources Code, particularly those regarding road standards for ingress, egress, and fire equipment access.
*Priority:* □ High □ Medium □ Low □ N/A

2.4 Fire suppression defense zones. □ Yes □ Partial □ No

**Recommendation:** Establish goals and policies that create wildfire defense zones for emergency services, including fuel breaks or other staging areas where WUI firefighting tactics could be most effectively deployed.
*Priority:* □ High □ Medium □ Low □ N/A

2.5 Prioritizing asset protection from fire when faced with a lack of suppression forces.
□ Yes □ Partial □ No

**Recommendation:** Identify and prioritize protection needs for assets at risk in the absence of response forces.
*Priority:* □ High □ Medium □ Low □ N/A

**Recommendation:** Establish fire defense strategies (such as fire ignition resistant areas) that provide adequate fire protection without dependency on fire resources (both air and ground) and could serve as safety zones for the public or emergency support personnel.
*Priority:* □ High □ Medium □ Low □ N/A

**Additional Land Use Planning Recommendations:**

3.0 **Housing:**

3.1 Incorporation of current fire safe building codes. □ Yes □ Partial □ No

**Recommendation:** Adopt building codes for new development in State Responsibility Areas or incorporated areas with VHFHSZ that are based on those established by the Office of the State Fire Marshal in Title 19 and Title 24 CCR, referred to as the “Wildland Urban Interface Building Codes.”
*Priority:* □ High □ Medium □ Low □ N/A

**Recommendation:** Ensure new development proposals contain specific fire protection plans,
actions, and codes for fire engineering features for structures in VHFHSZ. Examples include codes requiring automatic sprinklers in VHFHSZ.

Priority: [ ] High [ ] Medium [ ] Low [ ] N/A

3.2 Consideration of diverse occupancies and their effects on wildfire protection.

☐ Yes ☐ Partial ☐ No

Recommendation: Ensure risks to uniquely occupied structures, such as seasonally occupied homes, multiple dwelling structures, or other unique structures/owners, are considered for appropriate wildfire protection needs.

Priority: [ ] High [ ] Medium [ ] Low [ ] N/A

3.3 Fuel modification around homes. ☐ Yes ☐ Partial ☐ No

Recommendation: Establish ordinances in SRA or VHFHSZ for vegetation fire hazard reduction around structures that meet or exceed the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection's Defensible Space Guidelines for SRA and the Very High Fire Hazard severity zones, including vacant lots.
See http://www.bof.fire.ca.gov/pdfs/Copyof4291finalguidelines9_29_06.pdf

Priority: [ ] High [ ] Medium [ ] Low [ ] N/A

Recommendation: Reduce fuel around communities and subdivisions, considering fuels, topography, weather (prevailing winds and wind event specific to the area), fire ignitions and fire history.

Priority: [ ] High [ ] Medium [ ] Low [ ] N/A

Recommendation: Include policies and recommendations that incorporate fire safe buffers and greenbelts as part of the development planning. Ensure that land uses designated near high or very fire hazard severity zones are compatible with wildland fire protection strategies/capabilities.

Priority: [ ] High [ ] Medium [ ] Low [ ] N/A

3.4 Identification and actions for substandard fire safe housing and neighborhoods relative to fire hazard area. ☐ Yes ☐ Partial ☐ No

Recommendation: Identify and map existing housing structures that do not conform to contemporary fire standards in terms of building materials, perimeter access, and vegetative hazards in VHFHSZ or SRA by fire hazard zone designation.

Priority: [ ] High [ ] Medium [ ] Low [ ] N/A

Recommendation: Identify plans and actions to improve substandard housing structures and neighborhoods. Plans and actions should include structural rehabilitation, occupancy reduction, demolition, reconstruction, neighborhood–wide fuels hazard reduction projects, community education, and other community based solutions.

Priority: [ ] High [ ] Medium [ ] Low [ ] N/A
3.5 Assessment and projection of future emergency service needs. ☐ Yes ☐ Partial ☐ No

**Recommendation:** Ensure new development includes appropriate facilities, equipment, personnel and capacity to assist and support wildfire suppression emergency service needs. Future emergency service needs should be:

- Established consistent with state or national standards.
- Developed based on criteria for determining suppression resource allocation that includes elements such as identified values and assets at risk, ignition density, vegetation type and condition, as well as local weather and topography.
- Local Agency Formation municipal services reviews for evaluating level of service, response times, equipment condition levels and other relevant emergency service information.

**Priority:** ☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low ☐ N/A

**Additional Housing/Structures and Neighborhoods Recommendations:**

4.0 Conservation and Open Space:

4.1 Identification of critical natural resource values relative to fire hazard areas. ☐ Yes ☐ Partial ☐ No

**Recommendation:** Identify critical natural resources and other “open space” values within the geographic scope of the General Plan.

**Priority:** ☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low ☐ N/A

4.2 Inclusion of resource management activities to enhance protection of open space and natural resource values. ☐ Yes ☐ Partial ☐ No

**Recommendation:** Develop plans and action items for vegetation management that provides fire damage mitigation and protection of open space values.

**Priority:** ☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low ☐ N/A

**Recommendation:** Establish goals and policies for reducing the wildland fire hazards within the entity’s boundaries and, with the relevant partners, on adjacent private wildlands, federal lands, vacant residential lots, and greenbelts with fire hazards that threaten the entity’s jurisdiction.

**Priority:** ☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low ☐ N/A

4.3 Integration of open space into fire safety effectiveness. ☐ Yes ☐ Partial ☐ No

**Recommendation:** Establish goals and policies for incorporating systematic fire protection improvements for open space. Specifics policies should address fire mitigation planning with agencies/private landowners managing open space adjacent to the General Plan area, water sources for fire suppression, and other fire prevention and suppression needs.
5.0 **Circulation:**

5.1 Adequate access to high hazard wildland/open space areas. ☐Yes ☐Partial ☐No

**Recommendation:** Establish goals and policies for adequate access in Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones that meet or exceed standards in Title 14 CCR 1270 for lands with no structures, and maintain conditions of access in a suitable fashion for suppression access or public evacuation.

**Priority:** ☐High ☐Medium ☐Low ☐N/A

5.2 Incorporate a policy that provides for a fuel maintenance program along roadways in the agency having jurisdiction. ☐Yes ☐Partial ☐No

**Recommendation:** Develop an adaptive vegetation management plan that considers fuels, topography, weather (prevailing winds and wind event specific to the area), fire ignitions and fire history.

**Priority:** ☐High ☐Medium ☐Low ☐N/A

5.3 Emergency response barriers. ☐Yes ☐Partial ☐No

**Recommendation:** Identify goals and policies that address vital access routes that if removed would prevent fire fighter access (bridges, dams, etc.). Develop an alternative emergency access plan for these areas.

**Priority:** ☐High ☐Medium ☐Low ☐N/A

5.4 Adequacy of existing and future transportation system to incorporate fire infrastructure elements. ☐Yes ☐Partial ☐No

**Recommendation:** Establish goals and policies for proposed and existing transportation systems to facilitate fire infrastructure elements such as turnouts, helispots and safety zones.

**Priority:** ☐High ☐Medium ☐Low ☐N/A

6.0 **Post Fire Safety, Recovery and Maintenance:**
The post fire recommendations address an opportunity for the community and landowners to
re-evaluate land uses and practices that affect future wildfire hazards and risk. They also provide for immediate post-fire life and safety considerations to mitigate potential losses to life, human assets and critical natural resources.

6.1 Develop post-fire priorities and goals for the recovery of the built and natural environments.
☐ Yes ☐ Partial ☐ No

Recommendation: Reevaluate hazardous conditions and provide for future fire safe conditions. Evaluate redevelopment in high or very high fire hazard severity zones.
Priority: ☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low ☐ N/A

Recommendation: Restore sustainable landscapes and restore functioning ecosystems. Incorporate wildlife habitat/endangered species considerations.
Priority: ☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low ☐ N/A

Recommendation: Provide polices and goals for maintenance of the post-fire-recovery projects, activities, or infrastructure.
Priority: ☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low ☐ N/A

6.2 Post fire life and safety assessments. ☐ Yes ☐ Partial ☐ No

Recommendation: Develop frameworks for rapid post-fire assessment and project implementation to minimize flooding, protect water quality, limit sediment flows and reduce other risks on all land ownerships impacted by wildland fire.
Priority: ☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low ☐ N/A

Additional Post Fire Safety, Recovery and Maintenance Recommendations:

Additional Recommendations: