

SAN DIEGO FIRE-RESCUE COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION DIVISION

Zone 0 Update

Wildfire Prevention & Mitigation

Mission Statement

- The mission of the Wildfire Prevention and Mitigation Division is to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire loss by advancing community-wide resilience through strategic enforcement, public education, and risk-based mitigation. Guided by the California Wildland-Urban Interface Code, the Division prioritizes actions that meaningfully reduce structure ignition, enhance firefighter and resident safety, and improve neighborhood survivability at scale. This includes defensible space, ignition-resistant construction, strategic fuel reduction, evacuation readiness, and informed community action.

Why do we need the California Wildland Urban Interface Code?

- The CWUIC was created to reduce the chance that homes burn during a wildfire. In simple terms, the code focuses on **three main problems that cause houses to ignite**: embers, nearby vegetation, and combustible building materials.

1. **Stop embers from starting fires**

- wind-blown embers land on or near structures

2. **Create space so fire has less fuel near homes**

- flames or radiant heat cannot easily reach the building.

3. **Build homes that resist ignition**

- less likely to catch fire from heat or embers.

Adoption of CWUIC into SDMC

- ❑ CWUIC was adopted on February 28, 2026.
 - ❑ Applicable to new construction.
- ❑ CWUIC enforcement begins on existing homes on February 28, 2027.
- ❑ 3-year City-Wide Compliance Plan.



Zone 0 - (Immediate Ember-Resistant Zone)

- **Zone 0** is the first five feet surrounding a structure—including the area next to exterior walls, decks, and stairs.
- The first five feet around a building is treated as the **highest priority area for ignition prevention.**
 - Reduce Combustible Materials
 - Use non-combustible materials
 - Limit vegetation
 - Address common ember traps

San Diego Zone 0 Guidelines

- The City of San Diego developed these **Zone 0 Implementation Guidelines** to help translate those statewide recommendations into clear, practical guidance for residents.
- Support a gradual transition toward safer landscaping and building conditions near structures.
- Homes across the city were built under different building standards.
- As part of the San Diego Compliance Plan: Condition-based allowances for vegetation depending on the construction features of the building

Vegetation - 4.2 Existing Structures with Ignition-Resistant Construction Features

□ Vegetation within 5 feet of a structure is prohibited unless specifically allowed under the following limited conditions.

▣ Existing Structures with Ignition-Resistant Construction Features

- Permitted in-ground vegetation must comply with the following:
 - 1. All vegetation shall be Fire-Smart.
 - 2. All vegetation must be maintained in a healthy condition and free of dead material.
 - 3. Combustible mulch shall not be used.
 - 4. Vegetation shall be kept away from walls.
 - 5. The maximum height of plants does not exceed eighteen (18) inches.
 - 6. Vegetation shall be spaced at least 1.5 times plant height or 12 inches, whichever is greater.
 - 7. Plantings shall not create horizontal or vertical fuel continuity to adjacent plantings or the structure.

4.4 Trees Within Zone 0 For Existing and Historic Structures

- Trees can increase the risk of fire spreading to a structure if they are too close or not properly maintained. To reduce the risk of fire spread, maintenance will be required to minimize ember accumulation and prevent direct flame or radiant heat exposure to the structure.

Trees for Zone 0 will have to meet the following criteria:

- 1. Existing trees located within 5 feet of a structure may remain in place if the following conditions apply:
 - a. Shall be free of dead, dying, or diseased branches.
 - b. No branches or foliage shall be in direct contact with exterior walls, decks, balconies, or other projections.
 - c. Branches shall be maintained a minimum of 10 feet from a chimney or stovepipe.
 - d. Leaf litter and vegetative debris beneath the tree shall be regularly removed.
 - e. Ladder fuels beneath or adjacent to the tree shall be eliminated to prevent vertical fire spread.
 - f. All portions of a tree, other than the trunk, that extend within 10 feet of a roofline or chimney outlet shall be pruned to maintain clearance.

Not all trees are the same.

- As part of an approved Compliance Plan provided by San Diego Fire-Rescue, removal of an existing tree within 5 feet of a structure may be required to be removed if the tree presents an unreasonable fire risk due to species, condition, or fuel accumulation.



A Community-Based Approach

- City's mission is to reduce structure loss from wildfire while maintaining public trust.
- Education first.
- Focus on meaningful risk.
- Avoiding insignificant violations.

What The City Is Focused On

- Reducing obvious ember ignition hazards, such as combustible storage near homes and accumulated debris.
- City is not focused on minor issues or on homeowners' good-faith efforts.

The Bigger Picture

- Broader wildfire resilience strategy.
- Includes: safer building design, better vegetation management, improved evacuation routes, and stronger community protection.
- About adapting to modern wildfire conditions and protecting neighborhoods citywide.

Questions?

Resources



Ready, Set, Go



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