



Fire Hazards

After fire disasters, Gubernatorial Proclamations of a State of Emergency and Presidential Major Disaster Declarations have been declared on six occasions in Riverside County. Much of Riverside County is rated as a potential wildland fire area by the State of California Department of Forestry and Fire Prevention and by this Safety Element. Wildfire susceptibility is mapped in Figure S-11. A significant portion of the County is undeveloped and consists of rugged topography with highly flammable indigenous vegetation. In particular, the hillside terrain of Riverside County has a substantial fire risk. Fire potential for the County is typically greatest in the months of August, September, and October, when dry vegetation coexists with hot, dry Santa Ana winds.



Mobile home fires erupted at a greater rate (49.1 per thousand) than other structural fires (1.1 per thousand) as a result of the Northridge earthquake. Because the County of Riverside has a large number of mobile homes, there is a potential for high numbers of earthquake-induced structural fires.

Widespread fires following an earthquake, coupled with Santa Ana winds, constitute a worst-case fire suppression scenario for Riverside County. Because the fire danger is extremely high for three months of each year, there is a statistically significant chance that the worst-case fire suppression scenario could occur.

Following a major earthquake, water availability would likely be curtailed due to breaks in water lines caused by fault rupture, liquefaction or landslides. In addition, above-ground reservoirs are vulnerable to earthquakes, which would also affect the ability to fight fires.

Over time, all of California's wildlands will burn, as they are ecologically adapted to do. However, various human-created factors increase the risks that fires will occur; that they will be larger, more intense and more damaging; that fighting them will cost more; and that they will take a higher toll (in economic and non-economic terms).

The intent of these policies is to eliminate earthquake-induced fire as a threat and to develop an integrated approach to minimizing the threat of wildland fires.

Building Code & Performance Standards

The County's extreme diversity and complex pattern of land use and ownership require equally diverse and complex techniques to effectively manage the fire environment. Custom strategies for each situation can be created through combinations of pre-fire management, suppression, and post-fire management. These strategies should lessen the costly impacts of future wildfires and offer alternatives to continually increasing suppression forces.

Policies:

- S 5.1 Develop and enforce construction and design standards that ensure that proposed development incorporates fire prevention features through the following:
 - a. All proposed construction shall meet minimum standards for fire safety as defined in the County Building or Fire Codes, or by County zoning, or as dictated by the County Engineer based on building type, design, occupancy, and use.



- b. In addition to the standards and guidelines of the Uniform Building Code and Uniform Fire Code fire safety provisions, require additional standards for high-risk, high occupancy, dependent, and essential facilities where appropriate. These shall include assurance that structural and nonstructural architectural elements of the building will not:
 - impede emergency egress for fire safety manpower, equipment, and apparatus; nor
 - hinder evacuation from fire, including potential blockage of stairways or fire doors.
- c. Proposed development in High Fire Hazard areas shall provide secondary public access, unless determined otherwise by the County Fire Chief.
- d. Proposed development in High Fire Hazard areas shall use single loaded roads to enhance fuel modification areas, unless otherwise determined by the County Fire Chief.

Wind-Related Hazards

Widespread fires following an earthquake, coupled with Santa Ana winds, constitute a worst-case fire suppression scenario. Because of dry vegetation conditions and Santa Ana winds, the fire danger for Riverside County is considered extremely high for 25% of each year. Therefore, there is a statistically significant chance that this worst-case fire suppression scenario could occur.

Policies:

- S 5.2 Reduce fire threat and strengthen fire-fighting capability so that the County could successfully respond to multiple fires (AI 88).
- S 5.3 Require automatic natural gas shutoff earthquake sensors in high-occupancy industrial and commercial facilities, and encourage them for all residences.
- S 5.4 Utilize ongoing brush clearance fire inspections to educate homeowners on fire prevention tips. (AI 96)

Long-Range Fire Safety Planning

In the wildland/urban interface, flammable structures may be within reach of ignition sources from burning wildland and structural fuels. These are extremely dangerous and complex fire conditions that pose a tremendous threat to public and firefighter safety.

New developments frequently purport to maximize the amount of land left as natural open space. Cuts and/or fills are stopped at the natural interface. This leaves the backyard as the only buffer between the highly flammable natural vegetation and the house. Brush clearance is required, but can occasionally run into endangered species obstacles.

★
Santa Ana winds create a special hazard. Named by the early settlers at Santa Ana, these hot, dry winds enhance the fire danger throughout southern California.