

San Diego Fire-Rescue Department

Zone Zero Regulations

Parks and Recreation Board Meeting
February 19, 2026

Where did Zone 0 Come From?

Assembly Bill 3074

- Introduced in 2020 and changed GOV 51182 in 2021 requiring a new defensible space zone. Zone 0.

Board of Forestry and Fire Protection

- Tasked with developing regulations for zone 0 to take effect for new structures on January 1, 2023 and for existing structures 1 year later on January 1, 2024.

Current Timeline for State

- Governor issued Executive Order in 2025 to have Zone 0 regulations completed with effective date of January 1, 2026.
- Anticipated to take effect in March 2026 for new structures and up to 3 years later in 2029 for existing structures.

Science Behind Zone-0 Introduced?

- Based on extensive full scale fire testing conducted by the Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety.
- Maintaining 0-5 feet of non-combustible items around the home had a dramatic impact on the survivability during a simulated ember storm.



Zone 0 Recommendations

What to do:

1. Use **hardscape** like gravel, pavers, or concrete. No combustible bark or mulch.
2. Remove **all dead and dying plants**, weeds, and debris (leaves, needles, etc.) from your roof, gutter, deck, porch, stairways, and under any areas of your home.
3. Remove **all branches within 10 feet of any chimney or stovepipe outlet**.
4. Limit **combustible items** (like outdoor furniture and planters) on top of decks.
5. Relocate **firewood and lumber** to Zone 2.
6. Replace **combustible fencing, gates, and arbors** attached to the home with noncombustible alternatives.
7. Consider **relocating garbage and recycling containers** outside this zone.
8. Consider **relocating boats, RVs, vehicles**, and other combustible items outside this zone.



California Wildland-Urban Interface Code

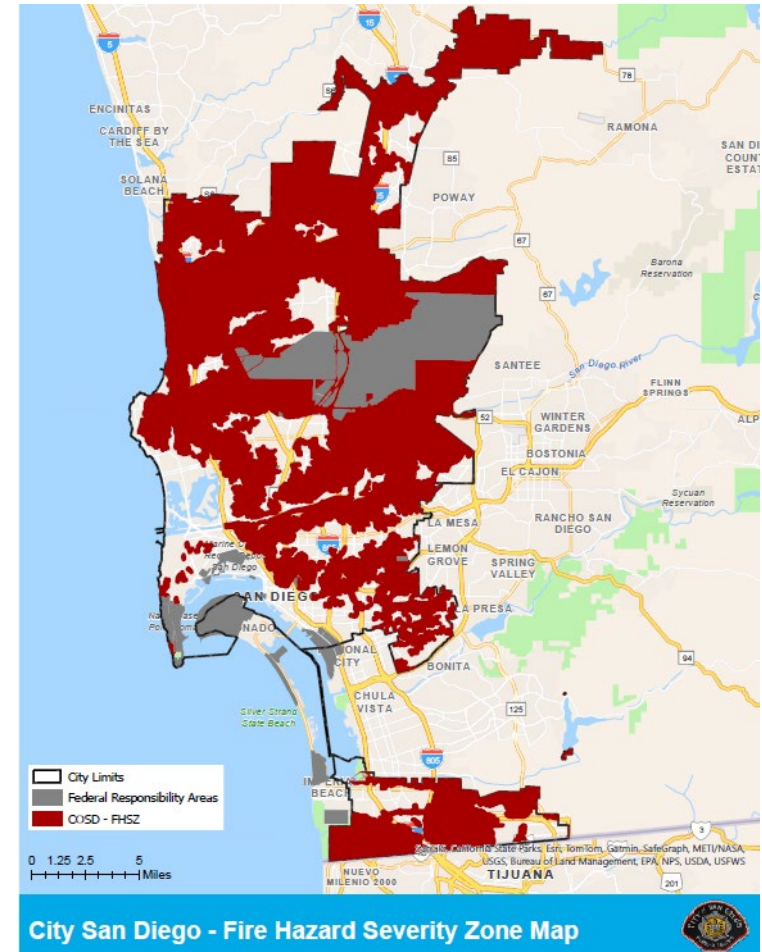
- CWUIC being adopted for the first time by California
- Published on July 1, 2025
- Effective date **January 1, 2026**
- Part 7 of the California Building Standards Code, adopted on triennial cycle.
- Consolidates several existing codes and regulations
- Local agencies must adopt through local ordinance including any local amendments or additions.



Wildland-Urban Interface Area Defined

Wildland-Urban Interface Fire Area:

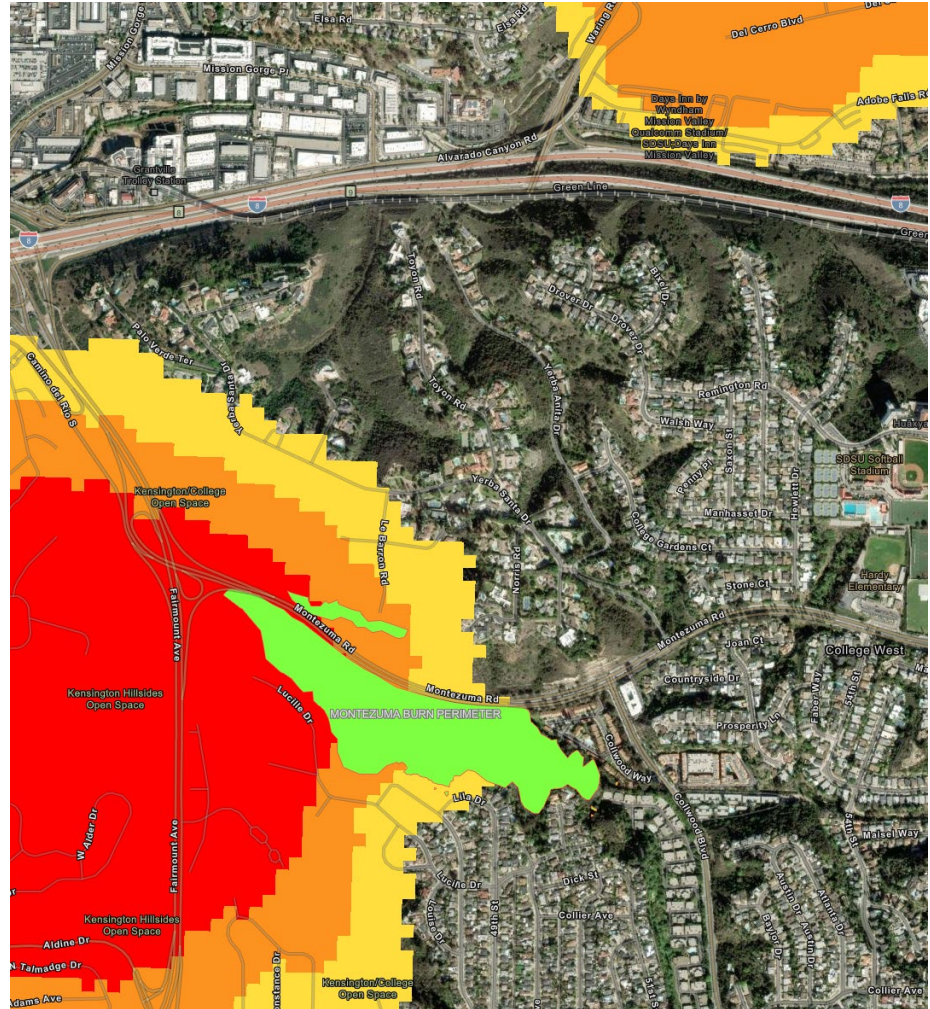
- *A geographical area identified by the state as a “Fire Hazard Severity Zone” in accordance with the Public Resources Code Sections 4201 through 4204 and Government Code Sections 51175 through 51189, and other areas designated by the enforcing agency to be at a significant risk from wildfires.*
- SFM issued recommended FHSZ for San Diego on March 24, 2025
- City of San Diego Adopted FHSZ maps including additional areas designated by SDFD through Ordinance O-21992 with an effective date of August 30, 2025.



Modifications to FHSZ Map

Many of the City's canyon rim areas were not identified in the 2025 LRA maps

- 1985 Normal Heights Fire
- 2024 Montezuma Fire



Inclusion Criteria

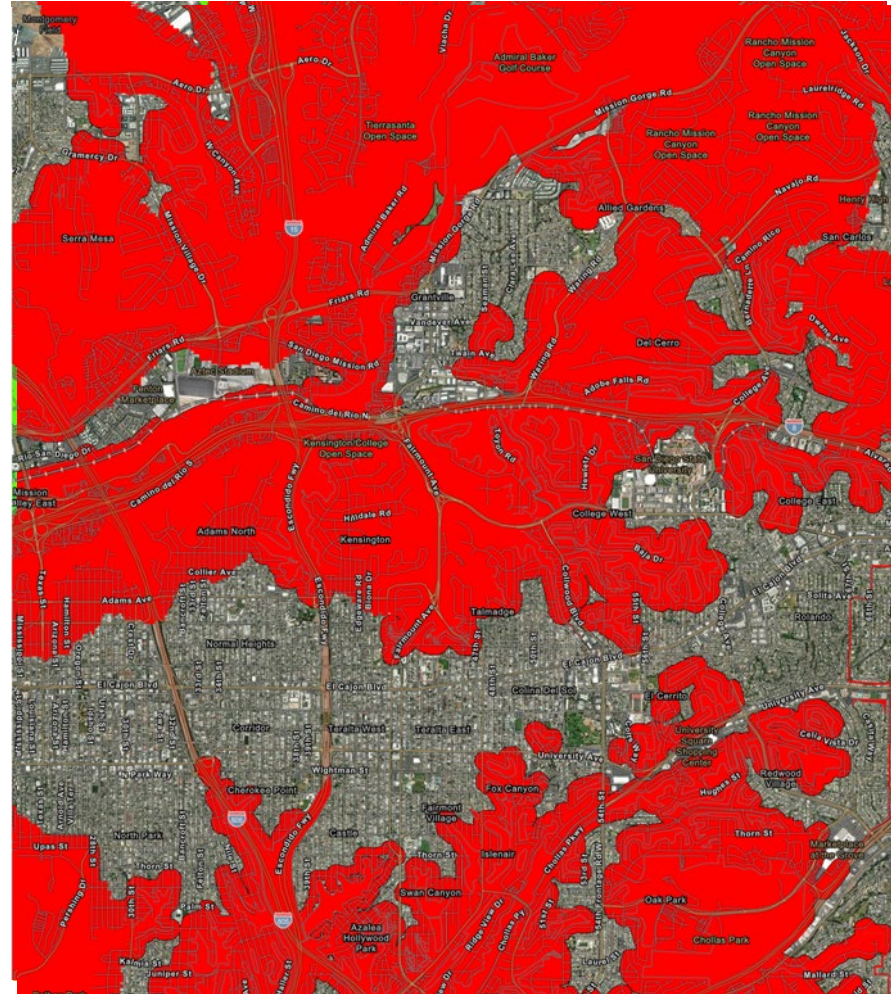
Primarily located in and around canyons and areas of naturalized vegetation.

- Vegetation
- Slope/terrain
- Fire History
- Access
- Consistent with 2009 methodology



New Map Effective August 30, 2025

- Adopted the FHSZ as designated by the SFM
- Re-designated High and Moderate to Very High
- Included canyons and brush management areas
- [VHFHSZ](#) online link





Local Adoption of 2025 CWUIC

- SDFD proposed local amendments to CWUIC including provisions for zone 0.
- Public Safety Committee December 12, 2025.
- City Council
 - 1st reading December 16th
 - 2nd reading January 13th
- Local Amendments anticipated to be effective mid-February 2026.

Zone 0 Timeline for Enforcement

Application to Structures	State	City of SD
New	March 2026	February 2026
Existing	2029?	February 2027*

*Ordinance allows for a compliance plan to be established



Zone 0 Regulations Proposed for 2025 CWUIC

- Based on draft regulations from Board of Forestry

Draft rule plead currently includes 4 options for compliance

Option 1 – Some plants in pots allowed

- No flammable landscaping materials are permitted, including grass, shrubs, mulches, etc.
- Exception: potted plants (under 18 inches tall) are allowed if kept away from walls, windows, and vents.

Option 2 – Some plants in pots and low, maintained vegetation allowed

- Same as Option 1 but also allows low plants under 4 inches tall (like moss or lawns) if kept away from walls, vents, and windows.

Option 3 – Some plants, in pots or planted, allowed

- No flammable landscaping materials are permitted including dead or dying plants, mulches, etc.
- Plants 18 inches or less are allowed as long as they are spaced appropriately and not directly beneath, above, or in front of windows, doors, or vents.

Option 4 – Well maintained plants allowed

- Allows plants in pots and other vegetation in Zone 0 but prohibits dead or dying plants, needles, leaves, weeds, and combustible mulches.

- SDFD plans to develop a guidance document after the BOF finalizes regulations clarifying requirements for existing homes.



Zone 0 Regulations Proposed for 2025 CWUIC

Current language in ordinance reads as follows:

Zone 0 is the area immediately adjacent to the exterior wall surface or patio, deck, or attachment to structures extending 5 feet (1524 mm) on a horizontal plane. Zone 0 requirements shall apply to all new structures applying for a building permit on or after the effective date of this Ordinance, and shall apply to existing structures one year after the Ordinance effective date. A compliance plan may be established to allow sufficient time for structures to fully comply with these regulations. The requirements within Zone 0 are as follows:

- (1) **No landscape materials that are likely to be ignited by embers** are permitted within Zone 0. This includes ornamental or native plants, shrubs, fallen leaves and tree needles, weeds, and combustible mulches including bark and woodchips; and
- (2) **No items that are likely to be ignited by embers** are permitted within Zone 0, including combustible boards, timbers, firewood, petroleum-based products, window boxes, and trellises. The *responsible person* shall keep the roof and rain gutters clear of leaves and needles. The area under decks, balconies, and stairs shall be kept free from *vegetation* and combustible items.

Enforcement Strategies

New Structures

- Enforced during plan review

Existing Structures

- Education
 - Guidance Document
 - Home Risk Assessment
- Enforcement
 - Focus on low-cost High Impact
 - Compliance Plans



Does Zone 0 Require Home Hardening?

- Zone 0 does not require upgrades to your home although voluntary home hardening is always recommended.
- Additions or remodels affecting the exterior of your home must meet Ignition Resistant Construction requirements in Chapter 5 of the CWUIC.

LOW-COST RETROFIT LIST

LOW-COST WAYS TO HARDEN YOUR HOME



 <p>REPLACE</p> <p>When it is time to replace your roof, replace it with a Class A fire-rated roof. OSFM Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Products.</p>	 <p>INSTALL</p> <p>Install a noncombustible gutter cover on gutters to prevent the accumulation of leaves and debris in the gutter.</p>	 <p>BLOCK</p> <p>Block any spaces between your roof covering and sheathing with noncombustible materials (bird stops).</p>
 <p>COVER</p> <p>Cover your chimney and stove-pipe outlets with a noncombustible corrosion-resistant metal mesh screen (spark arrestor), with 3/8-inch to 1/2-inch openings.</p>	 <p>INSTALL</p> <p>Install ember and flame-resistant vents. Consult your local building official and hire a licensed contractor for this project as these modifications may reduce airflow. OSFM Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Products.</p>	 <p>BLOCK</p> <p>Caulk and plug gaps greater than 1/8-inch around exposed rafters and blocking to prevent ember intrusion into the attic or other enclosed spaces.</p>
 <p>REPLACE</p> <p>When it's time to replace your windows, replace them with multi-paned windows that have at least one pane of tempered glass. OSFM Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Products.</p>	 <p>INSTALL</p> <p>Install weather-stripping to gaps greater than 1/8-inch between garage doors and door frames to prevent ember intrusion. The weather-stripping must be compliant with UL Standard 10C.</p>	 <p>BLOCK</p> <p>Inspect exterior siding for dry rot, gaps, cracks, and warping. Caulk or plug gaps greater than 1/8-inch in siding and replace any damaged boards, including those with dry rot.</p>
 <p>REPLACE</p> <p>When it's time to replace your siding or deck, use compliant noncombustible, ignition-resistant, or other OSFM Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Products.</p>	 <p>INSTALL</p> <p>Install a minimum 6-inch metal flashing, applied vertically on the exterior of the wall at the deck-to-wall intersection to protect the combustible siding material.</p>	 <p>COVER</p> <p>Cover openings to operable skylights with a noncombustible metal mesh screen with openings in the screen not to exceed 1/8-inch.</p>

*This list was developed as a best practices guide and to assist homeowners to ensure their home is more ignition-resistant from wildfires. Low cost can be subjective. Some of these items are based on upgrading to more stringent materials when that feature is up for replacement due to normal maintenance or lifespan, i.e. roofs.

Updated
April 2025

Questions?

