

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, Feb. 12, 2026

State-Mandated 'Zone Zero' Requirements Set to Go into Effect to Build Wildfire Resilience

CITY NOTIFYING THE PUBLIC OF NEW STATE STANDARDS FOR VERY HIGH FIRE SEVERITY ZONES; GUIDELINES FOR EXISTING PROPERTY OWNERS TAKE EFFECT IN 2027

SAN DIEGO – The City of San Diego is notifying San Diegans of state-mandated “Zone Zero” wildfire safety requirements for all new structures built within Very High Fire Severity Zones. The [Zone 0 requirements](#) focus on the area closest to a home or building, where research shows they are most vulnerable to ignition from wind-driven embers during a wildfire.

“Creating defensible space is one of the most effective steps a homeowner can take to reduce their wildfire risk,” said San Diego Fire-Rescue Chief Robert Logan. **“These statewide standards focus on the area closest to the home, where embers pose the greatest threat, and where informed and intentional actions today help protect homes, communities, and firefighters tomorrow.”**

Zone Zero, also known as the ember-resistant zone, refers to the area within five feet of a structure, including attached decks and stairs.

While California has long required defensible space in Zones One and Two (extending up to 100 feet from structures), Zone Zero was added to address the immediate area where research shows many homes are first ignited by wind-driven embers in a wildfire. These requirements are intended to reduce ignition risk and strengthen overall community wildfire resilience throughout the state.

“Wildfires are a year-round threat, especially in our canyon communities,” said San Diego City Councilmember and Public Safety Committee Chair, Marni von Wilpert. **“My office is committed to supporting wildfire-prevention efforts and ensuring our local firefighters have the tools they need to keep our communities safe and resilient.”**

Roughly 142,571 acres, or two-thirds of San Diego property, lies within designated Very High Fire Risk Severity Zones. Existing home and property owners in these areas are encouraged to begin taking meaningful, proactive steps toward compliance over the coming year.

What This Means for San Diegans

Effective today, Zone Zero requirements apply to all *new* structures built in designated [Very High Fire Severity Zones](#) within the city of San Diego. Applicants for new building permits must demonstrate compliance with Zone Zero requirements during the permit review process, including maintaining an ember-resistant zone within five feet of the structure that is free of combustible materials.

Existing home and property owners in Very High Fire Severity Zones must take proactive steps to meet Zone Zero guidelines by February 2027, in order to be in compliance with the state's requirements. This includes:

- Removing dead plants, dry or fallen leaves, pine needles, mulch, firewood, trash, debris, and other flammable materials within five feet of structures, including roofs and gutters, decks, porches, balconies, stairways, and areas beneath the home.
- Using hardscape materials such as concrete, gravel, pavers, or bare soil within the Zone 0 area.
- Limiting combustible items such as outdoor furniture and planters on decks.
- Replacing combustible fencing, gates, and arbors with non-combustible alternatives.
- Relocating garbage and recycling containers, boats, RVs, and vehicles outside of Zone 0.

Trees are allowed within Zone Zero as long as they are properly maintained and regularly pruned. Healthy branches must be kept at least five feet from roofs and exterior walls, and the tree canopy (drip line) at maturity must be maintained at least 10 feet from roofs and other structures.

Community Education and Support

San Diego Fire-Rescue's Community Risk Reduction Division has worked closely with local Fire Safe Councils, businesses, and community partners since 2021 to provide education on Zone Zero and help residents understand practical steps they can take to reduce wildfire risk.

Zone Zero requirements stem from [California Assembly Bill 3074](#), enacted in 2020, which directed the creation of ember-resistant zones around buildings in high fire hazard areas throughout California. Following delays in implementation, [a 2025 executive order](#) from Governor Gavin Newsom directed the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection to expedite final regulations by the end of 2025.

While homeowners are encouraged to meet Zone Zero guidelines by February 2027, the Department will continue to prioritize education, guidance, and collaboration. This includes offering guidance at the first sign of noncompliance and collaborating with residents to develop practical, realistic plans tailored to their property.

"We recognize that every home and property is different, and changes can take time," said San Diego Fire-Rescue Deputy Chief and Fire Marshal Tony Tosca. **"Our goal is to partner with residents to**

offer education, practical guidance, and resources that help reduce wildfire risk in a way that makes sense for their home and circumstances.”

Residents can request a home wildfire risk assessment and learn more about Zone Zero requirements at sandiego.gov/DefensibleSpace.



###