PROPERTY OWNER GUIDE

Proposed Zone 0

The five-foot ember-resistant area around homes and other structures

Rulemaking status as of November 9, 2026
The California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection adopted revised emergency regulations on November 5 after withdrawing the August package. The revised regulations have yet to take effect. The Board's notice anticipates submission to the Office of Administrative Law (OAL) on or after November 13. The five-calendar-day comment period starts when OAL posts the filing.

Where the state rule would apply

- **State Responsibility Areas (SRA).**
- **Local Responsibility Areas (LRA)** within locally designated Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones.

Look up your property on the State Fire Hazard Severity Zone map. Current state and local defensible space requirements continue to apply.

How to measure Zone 0

Measure five feet horizontally from the exterior wall or the outer edge of an attached deck, stairway, or pergola. Stop sooner at the property line or another qualifying structure.

A self-supporting deck, stairway, or pergola within one foot counts as attached. A noncombustible patio surface does not extend the zone. A roofed patio cover may qualify as a structure depending on its design. A neighbor's new building or accessory dwelling unit does not create additional defensible space obligations on your property.

Keep these buffers clear

The revised rule would require the following areas to be free of vegetation and combustible materials. Stop the measurement sooner at the property line or another qualifying structure.

Measure from	Minimum clear buffer
Exterior wall or eave	One foot from the wall or out to the eave edge, whichever is farther, up to five feet.
Windows, doors, and vents	Two feet from the opening.
Attached decks, stairs, and pergolas	Five feet from the outer edge.

MATERIALS AND MAINTENANCE

What can stay in Zone 0?

Landscaping, tree care, fences, and sheds

Combustible materials

When flammable vegetation conditions exist, keep bark mulch, wood chips, leaves, and other restricted combustibles out of Zone 0. Keep roofs and gutters clear, move firewood out of Zone 0, and clear vegetation and combustibles from under decks, balconies, stairs, and pergolas.

An inspector determines when temporary mulch is needed for erosion control during construction or an emergency.

Permitted plants outside the clear buffers

Plant type	Conditions
Lawns and ground covers	Non-woody plants up to three inches tall.
Small plantings	Non-woody plants three to 18 inches tall in plantings of up to one square foot. Leave two feet between plantings, measured from the widest points of the plants.
Potted plants	Non-woody plants up to 18 inches tall in movable noncombustible containers holding up to five gallons. Leave two feet between containers.

Keep permitted plants free of dead or dying material. Measure potted plant height from the base of the visible plant.

Existing trees

New trees are prohibited under the revised rule. Maintain existing trees as follows.

- Remove dead or dying branches and ladder fuels, including those in the lowest six feet or lowest third of the tree’s height, whichever is less.
- Keep live branches ten feet from chimney and stovepipe outlets, clear of eaves, and one foot from the structure where there is no eave.
- Keep live branches five feet above the roof and five feet from attached decks, stairs, and pergolas. Keep them two feet from windows, doors, and vents.

Fences, gates, and small sheds

Directly attached fences or gates and new ones within five feet must be entirely noncombustible. If attached or within one foot, provide at least a five-foot noncombustible span from the attachment or closest point. Existing fence and gate repairs are exempt from these provisions.

Sheds and similar outbuildings under 120 square feet and not used for habitation can be within Zone 0 only if made entirely of noncombustible materials.

PROPOSED PHASE-IN

When would it apply?

Deadlines are measured from the effective date of the state regulations

If approved, the revised emergency regulations would take effect when filed with the Secretary of State. New construction would meet all applicable provisions at that point. The revised text uses the initial building permit application date to distinguish new construction from existing or already-underway projects.

Existing homes and structures

Timing	Actions
At the effective date	Clear roofs and gutters, remove dead or dying tree branches, and keep live branches ten feet from chimney and stovepipe outlets. New fences and gates within five feet must be entirely noncombustible. Repairs to existing fences and gates are exempt from the fence and gate provisions.
Three years after the effective date	Move firewood and remove other restricted combustibles. Clear vegetation and combustibles beneath decks, balconies, stairs, and pergolas. Meet the remaining live-branch clearance and ladder-fuel rules.
Three to five years after the effective date	Meet the clear-buffer and permitted planting standards and the attachment and clearance rules for existing fences and gates. In covered LRA, this phase also includes outbuilding requirements. Check the filed rule for the SRA outbuilding deadline.

In covered LRA, a later deadline for the final phase requires a local ordinance supported by a written finding. In SRA, the CAL FIRE Director sets the schedule.

What you can do now

Clean roofs and gutters, move firewood away from buildings, clear combustible materials from under decks and stairs, and consider replacing combustible mulch near walls with gravel or another noncombustible material.

Official updates and local help

November 5 Board rulemaking package • OAL filings and comment periods

Board of Forestry Zone 0 resources • Current SVFD defensible space requirements

Rule references: proposed 14 CCR §§ 1298.02-1298.04 and 1299.02-1299.03.

SVFD Fire Prevention Bureau 707-996-2102 • 630 Second Street West, Sonoma, CA 95476