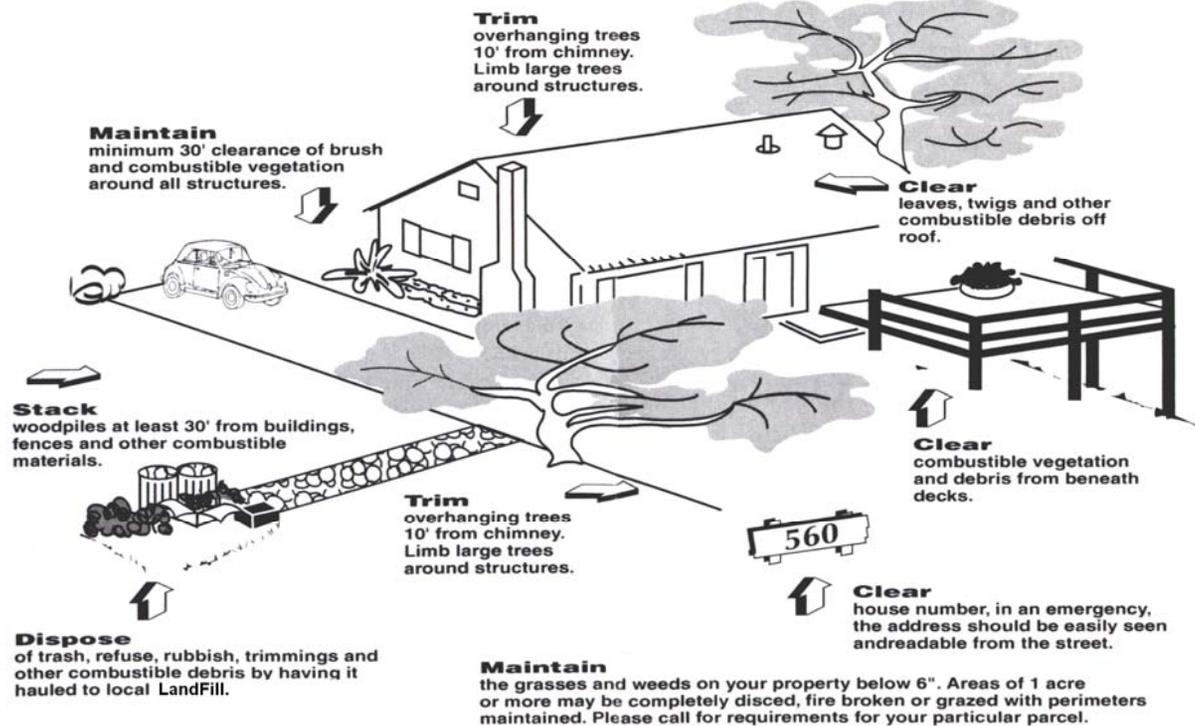


MINIMUM FIRE SAFETY STANDARDS

1. Vegetation must not exceed 6 inches in height any time after the compliance deadline.
2. Maintain grasses and weeds below six inches for ten feet horizontally on both sides of all roadways, including driveways and access routes.
3. Clear flammable vegetation a minimum of thirty feet around any structure, occupied or not. Ornamental vegetation should be kept clear of dead material. Some conditions, such as slopes, may require up to a 100-foot clearance.
4. Parcels up to one acre shall be completely abated. Parcels one to five acres require 30-foot clearance around structures and perimeter property lines. Additional 30-foot cross fuel breaks may also be required.
5. Parcels larger than five acres require 30-foot clearance around structures and perimeter property lines in addition to 30-foot cross breaks as needed to separate the remaining vegetation into sections no larger than five acres.
6. Keep property clear of accumulation of combustible debris, such as trash, wood, and dead vegetation. Stacked firewood and neatly piled yard waste is not considered to be combustible debris.
7. Keep vegetation cleared from under the eaves of houses.
8. Trim tree branches to at least ten feet from chimney.
9. Clear leaves, pine needles and debris from roof and gutters.



Fire Resistant Landscaping

The following is a partial list of fire resistant plants that you may choose to use around your home to reduce the risk of fire. Contact your local nursery for selections appropriate to your area.

Trees:	Shrubs:	Escallonia	Groundcover:	Freeway Daisy
African Sumac	Bearberry	Hopseed Bush	Aaron's Beard	Ice Plant
Brazilian Pepper	Carmel Creeper	Italian Buckthorn	Australian Daisy	Ivy
California Pepper	Carolina Cherry	Lemonade Berry	Candytuft	Morning Glory Bush
	Catalina Cherry	Texas Privet	Capeweed	Rock rose

Fire Safety Through Vegetation Management

Santa Clara County
Agricultural Commissioner's Office
Weed Abatement Program



1553 Berger Drive #1
San Jose, CA 95112
Phone: (408) 282-3145
Fax: (408) 286-2460
SCC.WeedAbatement@AEM.sccgov.org

The Santa Clara County Weed Abatement Program

The Santa Clara County Department of Agriculture and Environmental Management and your city are working together to protect your community from fire. We need your help. Please read and follow the directions provided in this brochure regarding fire prevention on your property. The purpose of the Weed Abatement Program is to prevent fire hazards posed by vegetative growth and the accumulation of combustible materials.

The Weed Abatement program is entirely funded from fees charged to residents if the County contractor must perform weed abatement work on the property or, if the property is not in compliance with Minimum Fire Safety Standards (MFSS) when it is first inspected by the County in the spring. Properties that fail the initial inspection will be charged an inspection fee, even if the resident completes the weed abatement. Properties that meet and maintain the MFSS will not be charged.

Program staff annually inspect parcels at the beginning of the fire season, which is typically in March or April depending on your jurisdiction. If the parcel is not in compliance at the time of inspection, the property owner will be charged an inspection fee, and the owner will be sent a courtesy notice as a reminder to abate the weeds. If the weeds are not abated by the property owner, the work will be completed by the County contractor. The property owner will pay a fee equal to the contractor's charges plus a County administrative fee. All fees will be included in your property tax bill.

Our Goal Is Voluntary Compliance

Property Owner's Responsibilities

- Do not allow a fire hazard to exist on your property. The Minimum Fire Safety Standards (MFSS) in this brochure give you guidelines to follow in order to maintain your property and protect against a fire hazard. **Please contact our office if you need guidance or have any questions regarding the requirements!**
- Make arrangements to have your property maintained throughout the year. Contractors can be found in the yellow pages. You may choose to have the County contractor maintain your property. A current price list is included in your packet.
- Please complete and return the Reply Form provided in your mailing packet by the date on the form. Indicate your preference regarding performance of weed abatement services.

Program Staff Responsibilities

- Weed Abatement Inspectors will perform periodic inspections on all parcels included in the Santa Clara County Weed Abatement Program. Properties that fail the initial inspection will be charged an inspection fee, even if the resident completes the weed abatement.
- Inspectors will order the County contractor to perform all necessary abatement work on any parcel where the MFSS are not met. An attempt will be made to give the owner a courtesy notice prior to initial abatement.
- On properties where the MFSS have been met, but a fire hazard still exists, the Agricultural Commissioner's Office will send a letter to the owner specifying additional work that needs to be performed.
- The County contractor uses several methods of abatement including discing and handwork. The property owner is free to select whatever method they choose, provided the MFSS of all federal, state and local laws are met.
- The Agricultural Commissioner's Office will place inspection costs and the charges for County contractor services plus a County administrative fee on the property owner's tax bill during the next fiscal year.

Burrowing Owls

These small owls nest in abandoned ground squirrel burrows. Discing collapses the burrows and kills the young. These owls are listed as a state Species of Special Concern and are protected by the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act. If you suspect burrowing owls on your property you **must** use another form of weed abatement such as mowing or weed eating. If you request the County perform abatement services, please notify program staff or your City if burrowing owls are known to exist on your property.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Why have I received an Abatement Notice?

A. Typically, a property is placed on the program if a Weed Abatement Inspector identified a potential fire hazard on the property. Fire Departments and other agencies also submit complaints to the Agricultural Commissioner's Office.

Q. What is required of me now that I am on the Program?

A. All property owners are required to maintain their property free of fire hazards throughout the year.

More FAQ:

Q. What is the SC County Weed Abatement Program?

A. This is a monitoring program and our primary objective is voluntary compliance. See the first two paragraphs of this brochure for further specifics.

Q. How long will I be on the Program?

A. Your property will remain on the Program for three years. If no hazards are found during that time your property may be removed from the program.

Q. How much will this cost me?

A. There will be no cost to you if the Minimum Fire Safety Standards (MFSS) are met by the given deadline and maintained through the fire season by the County. If the parcel does not meet the MFSS when it is first inspected in the spring, or if work is required by the County contractor, you will be charged a fee. Our goal is to ensure that the MFSS are met at the lowest possible cost to the property owner.

Q. How will I be billed?

A. Should the parcel fail the initial inspection, the charges for the inspection and any abatement work performed will appear as a special assessment on your next property tax bill.

Q. Why have you performed work on my property while the vegetation is still green?

A. Grass, weeds or piles of combustible debris have been declared a public nuisance by your jurisdiction. Abating fire hazards in the spring to minimize volume of combustible material helps us to be more effective during the peak fire season.

Q. Will you notify me prior to beginning abatement work?

A. Property owners are responsible for preventing fire hazards on their property. If the MFSS have been met, but further work is necessary, you will receive notice prior to the County contractor performing the work. If the MFSS have **not** been met, an attempt will be made to give the owner a courtesy notice prior to initial abatement.

Q. Where can I find someone to provide abatement services?

A. Weed Abatement contractors can be found in the Yellow Pages under "Weed Control Services" or "Discing Services". You may have the County contractor perform the necessary work; see your mailing packet for a current price list as administrative costs are charged.

Q. How can I get additional information or assistance regarding the specific requirements for my property?

A. Weed Abatement Inspectors are available to assist you and answer your questions. Please call our Customer Service line at (408) 282-3145 to schedule a consultation with program staff or to obtain additional information.