



## City Council Agenda Item

**City Council Meeting Date:** July 1, 2025

**TO:** Dean Albro, City Manager

**FROM:** John Steffens, Battalion Chief – Fire Marshal  
j\_steffens@ci.lompoc.ca.us

**SUBJECT:** Introduction of Ordinance No. 1729(25) Designating Fire Hazard Severity Zones

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### **Recommendation:**

Staff recommends that the City Council introduce, for first reading by title only with further reading waived, Ordinance No. 1729(25) (Attachment 1) designating Fire Hazard Severity Zones, as required by the California State Fire Marshal.

### **Background/Discussion:**

This report provides an overview of the designated Fire Hazard Severity Zones within our region, emphasizing the importance of accurate classification for wildfire risk mitigation and land use planning. These zones are identified by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) and serve as essential tools for guiding development restrictions, emergency preparedness, and resource allocation in high-risk areas. Understanding and utilizing these designations helps local jurisdictions better protect their communities and comply with state safety requirements.

State law requires all local jurisdictions to adopt the Fire Hazard Severity Zones through formal ordinances. By doing so, municipalities and counties integrate these classifications into their local planning and building codes, ensuring consistent and enforceable wildfire safety measures. Jurisdictions must incorporate the latest severity zone maps provided by the California State Fire Marshal, either adopting them as presented or increasing the severity levels where deemed necessary for enhanced protection. However, jurisdictions are explicitly prohibited from reducing the severity zones below the levels established by the State Fire Marshal to maintain a uniform and effective wildfire risk management system statewide. (See Attachment 2 for more information and frequently asked questions.)

Fire Hazard Severity Zone maps emerged from major destructive fires, prompting the recognition of these areas and the development of strategies to mitigate wildfire risks. A legislative response led to mandated mapping across California under the California

Public Resources Code, sections 4201-4204, encompassing all State Responsibility Areas (SRA).

The State Fire Marshal is mandated to classify lands within State Responsibility Areas into Fire Hazard Severity Zones. Fire Hazard Severity Zones fall into one of the following classifications:

- Moderate
- High
- Very High

The California laws that require Fire Hazard Severity Zones include California Public Resources Code 4201-4204, California Code of Regulations Title 14, Section 1280, and California Government Code 51175-89. California Government Code Section 51179 mandates that local agencies in California designate, by ordinance, moderate, high, and very high fire hazard severity zones in their jurisdiction within 120 days of receiving recommendations from the State Fire Marshal. The law does NOT allow a local authority to request changes or provide comments to the State Fire Marshal on the Fire Hazard Severity Zone designations. Local agencies cannot downgrade hazard levels identified by the state but may increase them if justified.

Ensuring that these zones are accurately incorporated into local regulations is crucial for promoting a proactive approach to wildfire preparedness, safeguarding public safety, and facilitating resilient community development. This process not only aligns with state mandates but also strengthens local efforts to mitigate wildfire risks and promote sustainable land management practices.

The adoption of Fire Hazard Severity Zones by local or state agencies is intended to support community wildfire preparedness and land-use planning; however, it does **not** directly impact residents' insurance rates. Insurance companies use a variety of proprietary risk models and data sources, many of which differ from the state's fire mapping—to assess property risk and determine coverage options or premiums. Therefore, the official designation of a fire hazard severity zone does not automatically result in changes to a homeowner's insurance rates or availability.

**Fiscal Impact:**

There is no fiscal impact.

**Conclusion:**

Adoption of Ordinance No. 1729(25) indicating the implementation of the required California State Fire Marshal, local Fire Hazard Severity Zones.

Respectfully submitted,

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John Steffens, Battalion Chief – Fire Marshal

**APPROVED FOR SUBMITTAL TO THE CITY MANAGER:**

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Brian Fallon, Fire Chief

**APPROVED FOR SUBMITTAL TO THE CITY COUNCIL:**

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Dean Albro, City Manager

Attachments: 1) Ordinance No. 1729(25)  
2) FAQ 2024 Fire Hazard Severity Zones