



Folsom City Council Staff Report

MEETING DATE:	10/28/2025
AGENDA SECTION:	Public Hearing
SUBJECT:	Ordinance No. 1358 – An Ordinance of the City of Folsom Adding Section 9.37.035 Pertaining to Wildfire Prevention and Amending Certain Sections in Chapter 8.36 and Certain Chapters in Title 14 of the Folsom Municipal Code Pertaining to Adoption of Various Uniform Codes (Introduction and First Reading)
FROM:	Community Development Department

RECOMMENDATION / CITY COUNCIL ACTION

The Community Development Department and Fire Department recommend City Council conduct a public hearing, followed by introduction and first reading of Ordinance No. 1358 – An Ordinance of the City of Folsom Adding Section 9.37.035 Pertaining to Wildfire Prevention and Amending Certain Sections in Chapter 8.36 and Certain Chapters in Title 14 of the Folsom Municipal Code Pertaining to Adoption of Various Uniform Codes

BACKGROUND

The purpose of this Ordinance is to update the building and fire life safety regulations and adopt the 2025 Title 24 California Code of Regulations (Title 24 CCR) with local amendments, pursuant to state law.

Presently, the Folsom Municipal Code (FMC) Chapter 8.36 contains provisions relative to the California Fire Code and Title 14 contain provisions relative to the California Building Codes based on the 2022 editions of Title 24 CCR. The California Code of Regulations includes the Building Code, Plumbing Code, Wildland-Urban Interface Code, Green Building Standards Code, Electrical Code, Residential Code, Mechanical Code, Historical Building Code, Existing Building Code, References Standards Code, Fire Code, Energy Code, Property Maintenance Code, and Swimming Pool and Spa Code.

On January 10, 2023, the City Council adopted Ordinance No. 1335 and No. 1336, and the 2022 edition of the Title 24 CCR.

Presently, an amendment to CFC Chapter 90 in Section 8.36.080, prevents the spread of wildfires in open space. As determined by the fire chief, a specific open space area that presents

an exceptional and continuing fire danger may be closed until conditions change. Signage prohibiting entry by unauthorized persons shall be posted.

The 2025 edition of the Title 24 CCR, incorporating the 2024 editions of the International Codes, have been published by the California Building Standards Commission and are effective as State law January 1, 2026, and will be applicable for the next three years ending December 31, 2028.

The Title 24 CCR now includes the 2025 California Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Code. The 2025 California WUI Code is a compilation of code sections extracted from other California Code books to provide all mitigation measures against wildfire and wildland fuel in one code book. The 2025 California WUI Code applies to new construction and exterior alterations in designated Wildland-Urban Interface areas within California, specifically in State Responsibility Areas and Local Responsibility Areas designated as Very High Hazard Severity Zones, and other areas designated as a WUI by local agencies.

POLICY / RULE

The California Building Standards Commission has amended the 2022 Title 24 CCR as the 2025 edition of the Title 24 CCR which goes into effect 180 days after the publication according to state statute. California Health and Safety Code Section 18938(b) mandates that Building Standards Codes are applicable to all occupancies in the State. Health and Safety Code 18941.5 allows cities to amend building standards contained in the California Codes based on specified criteria prior to the effective date of the codes. Government Code Section 50022.2 grants local agencies the authority to adopt codes by reference.

ANALYSIS

The purpose of this ordinance is to adopt the 2025 Title 24 CCR as required by state law. The State of California requires a triennial update to statewide building and fire codes and requires all municipalities to complete the same review. Health & Safety Code Sections 17958.5, 17958.7, and 18941.5 allows cities to amend building standards contained in the California Codes based on specified criteria prior to the effective date of the codes. The following are the findings of fact:

1. CLIMATIC:

- (a.) Climate has one of the greatest impacts to fire behavior and other major emergency events because it cannot be controlled. Average yearly rainfall for Folsom is approximately 18 inches and typically occurs from October to April. Low-level fog is present throughout the winter months and frequently causes visibility to be reduced. Fog, in conjunction with cold temperatures, may also cause freezing and slick roadways. These weather-related conditions may cause delays for emergency responders.
- (b.) Summers are arid and warm and there is generally no measurable precipitation. Temperatures for this dry period range from 70 to 112 degrees Fahrenheit and are frequently accompanied by light to gusty winds. The relative humidity during

summer months ranges from 2 to 30 percent, which is arid. The City contains thousands of acres of open space, which, in conjunction with the dry and windy conditions create hazardous situations culminating in grass and brush fires. Wind-driven fires have led to serious consequences in similar areas of the State.

- (c.) The Sacramento region has extreme variations in weather patterns, too. Summers are arid and warm, winters are cool to freezing, and fall and spring can bring any combination of weather patterns together. It is this cyclical uncertainty that allows weather events such as rapid melting of the snowpack, which causes flooding in the low-lying valley areas of Sacramento County. The doubling of average rainfall called an "El Nino" event has occurred from time to time and causes the grass to mature and grow in excess of six feet high before it dries out.
- (d.) Climate is one of the greatest impacts to fire behavior and other major emergency events because it cannot be controlled. The drying out of wood and wildland fuels in the summer months allows for easy ignition.

2. GEOLOGICAL:

- (a.) The City is susceptible to seismic hazards resulting from movement along any one of several known faults in Northern California. The most serious direct earthquake hazard threat is from the damage or collapse of buildings and other structures due to ground movement. In addition to damage caused by earthquakes, there is the possibility of earthquake-induced fires starting because of damage to gas lines, power lines, or heat producing appliances and the unavailability of water for fire control due to broken water mains.
- (b.) In addition, unstable slopes have been identified in the City, which present a significant potential for landslides. In the event of a major earthquake or landslide, some areas of the City may not be accessible to emergency equipment and, if bridges or roads are damaged, the City may be isolated from outside assistance.

3. TOPOGRAPHICAL:

- (a.) Several topographical features bisect the City, including the American River, Lake Natoma, and Folsom Lake, as well as creeks, natural parkways, open space, bridges, and railroad tracks. Traffic has to be channeled around several of these topographical features and limitations, which create traffic congestion and delays emergency response. These features are located between the fire stations located within the City of Folsom.
- (b.) The California Division of Occupational Safety and Health, better known as Cal/OSHA, requires two firefighters to be located outside when two or more firefighters are inside of a burning structure. This is known as the "two in-two out" rule. It is imperative to minimize the impact of delays affecting the timely response of the firefighters.

- (c.) Increasingly heavy traffic congestion on the City's major streets acts as a barrier to timely response for fire and emergency vehicles. Several roadways are expected to have an increased traffic flow as the City continues to increase in population.
- (d.) Preservation of wetland areas, natural parkways, riparian corridors along rivers/streams, vernal pools, open spaces, and endangered species habitats have all contributed to access problems as well as exemption from vegetation abatement programs. These situations, though very environmentally important, do increase the demands on the fire service due to the extreme fire hazard created by fuel loading, limited access, and reduced setbacks.
- (e.) The rural geographical areas not yet provided with adequate fire protection are subject to a higher degree of risk without mitigating measures.

The Community Development Department and Fire Department believe the amendment and adoption of the 2025 Title 24 CCR, based on the 2024 International Building Code, with local amendments, is necessary to provide a reasonable and prudent level of fire and life safety to residents, businesses, and visitors of the City of Folsom.

In the adoption of the 2025 Title 24 CCR, the Community Development Department and Fire Department will be amending the FMC Chapter 8.36 to reflect updated California Fire Code sections, amend certain Chapters of Title 14 to reflect updated California Building Codes, adopt Appendix D of the 2025 CFC for code requirements for Fire Access Roads, remove FMC code language that has been moved to the 2025 California Wildland Urban Interface Code, add section 9.37.035 for continued wildfire prevention in open spaces based on the fire chiefs determination, and revise FMC code language to be consistent with the 2025 WUI Code and local agencies based on fire severity zones.

The 2025 Title 24 CCR was reorganized, and portions of the Codes were moved to create the 2025 Wildland Urban Interface Code. The 2025 Wildland Urban Interface Code applies to all of California based on the Fire Hazard Severity Zone, the responsibility of the State or Local Agency, and other areas designated as a WUI by local agencies.

The California State Fire Marshal designates areas of the state as moderate, high, or very high severity zone based on standardized criteria. These designations consider factors such as vegetation, terrain, weather conditions, and wind patterns that contribute to wildfire spread. The 2025 Fire Hazard Severity Map for Folsom (Attachment 3) was adopted by ordinance on May 13, 2025.

Portions of the City are in a Moderate Fire Hazard Severity Zone in a Local Responsibility Area (LRA) as identified by the State Fire Marshal. Staff determines local amendments to the CFC based on the fire hazard severity zone, life safety risk, and geological, climatic, and topographical factors. Staff recommend the adoption of Appendix D (Attachment 4), Fire Apparatus Access Roads, in the 2025 California Fire Code. Appendix D contains more detailed elements for use with basic requirements found in Section 503 of the CFC and is a tool for

jurisdictions looking for guidance in establishing access requirements for residential and multi-family developments. Appendix D may be adopted by jurisdictions in Moderate Fire Severity Zones in an LRA where the Wildland Urban Interface Code may not apply. Appendix D realigns the FMC with surrounding areas not in High Hazard Severity Zones (Attachment 5). Required setbacks for buildings are also modified to rely on the Building Code requirements for fire-resistive construction and fire sprinkler requirements.

The Folsom Municipal Code is modified to remove jurisdictional direction regarding road widths, grade, turning radius, dead end lengths, number of fire access roads for large sites, signage, and road gates and implement the standards set forth in Appendix D (Attachment 4). Appendix D is also consistent with local jurisdictional requirements and modified to include access road placement relative to building height. This expands the parameters from previous FMC requirements and allows for more clarity for higher density projects.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Adopting the 2025 edition of the Title 24 California Code of Regulations, based on the 2024 International Code of Regulations, with local amendments, as required by state law, and should not cause any financial impact.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15061 b (3) (General Rule Exemption) of the CEQA Guidelines.

ATTACHMENT

1. Ordinance No. 1358 – An Ordinance of the City of Folsom Adding Section 9.37.035 Pertaining to Wildfire Prevention and Amending Certain Sections in Chapter 8.36 and Certain Chapters in Title 14 of the Folsom Municipal Code Pertaining to Adoption of Various Uniform Codes
2. Ordinance No. 1358 Strikethrough
3. Fire Hazard Severity Zone Map
4. 2025 California Fire Code Appendix D
5. Summary of Changes

Submitted,



Pam Johns, Community Development Director