



## Folsom City Council Staff Report

<b>MEETING DATE:</b>	4/22/2025
<b>AGENDA SECTION:</b>	New Business
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Ordinance No. 1350 - An Uncodified Ordinance of the City of Folsom to Designate Fire Hazard Severity Zones in the Local Responsibility Area (LRA) – (Introduction and First Reading)
<b>FROM:</b>	Fire Department

### **RECOMMENDATION / CITY COUNCIL ACTION**

Staff respectfully request that the City Council introduce and conduct the first reading of Ordinance No. 1350 - An Uncodified Ordinance of the City of Folsom to Designate Fire Hazard Severity Zones in the Local Responsibility Area (LRA). The second reading and adoption of the ordinance will follow at the May 13, 2025, City of Folsom council meeting.

### **BACKGROUND / ISSUE**

This agenda item involves adopting an ordinance to designate Fire Hazard Severity Zones within the Local Responsibility Area (LRA) and reference the City of Folsom LRA Fire Hazard Severity Zones Map, published on March 10, 2025.

Under state law, the State Fire Marshal is responsible for classifying lands within State Responsibility Areas (SRA) into Fire Hazard Severity Zones. Following the devastating 1991 Oakland Hills Fire, this requirement was expanded in 1992 to include Local Responsibility Areas, requiring the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) to assess fire hazard severity in these areas as well. In 2021, CAL FIRE was further directed to identify Moderate and High Fire Hazard Severity Zones, in addition to the previously designated Very High zones in Local Responsibility Areas. This update ensures that LRA maps, which previously only reflected very high hazard classifications, now also include moderate and high hazard zones.

The updated Fire Hazard Severity Zones maps apply to all areas where fire protection is not the responsibility of state or federal agencies. A separate map for State Responsibility Areas

was updated and became effective in 2024. CAL FIRE developed the updated maps using a science-based, field-tested model that assigns hazard scores based on key factors influencing fire likelihood and behavior. The model considers fire history, existing and potential fuel sources such as natural vegetation, predicted flame length, blowing embers, terrain, and typical fire weather conditions.

The maps reflect fire hazard rather than fire risk. Similar to flood zone maps, these designations indicate the probability of fire occurring in a given area over a 30 to 50-year period, without considering mitigation efforts such as home hardening, recent wildfires, or fuel reduction programs.

Under California Government Code Section 51179(3), local agencies cannot reduce the fire hazard severity level assigned by the State Fire Marshal. However, they may increase the designation if they determine a higher hazard level is warranted. Local agencies do not have the authority to remove or lower designated fire hazard severity zones from the CAL FIRE maps. These state-mandated designations play a crucial role in land use planning, fire safety regulations, and emergency preparedness efforts for communities located in fire-prone areas.

### **POLICY / RULE**

California Government Code Section 51179(a) requires local agencies, including cities, counties, or districts responsible for fire protection within a moderate fire hazard severity zone, to designate by ordinance the moderate, high, and very high fire hazard severity zones within their jurisdiction. This designation must occur within 120 days of receiving recommendations from the State Fire Marshal pursuant to Section 51178. The City of Folsom received the Local Responsibility Area Fire Hazard Severity Zones Map on March 10, 2025. As the agency responsible for fire protection within a moderate fire hazard severity zone, the City of Folsom is required to adopt this ordinance.

### **ANALYSIS**

The proposed ordinance would designate Fire Hazard Severity Zones within the Local Responsibility Area (LRA) based on the updated LRA Fire Hazard Severity Zones Map, published on March 10, 2025.

State law requires CAL FIRE to evaluate fire hazard severity in LRAs. In 2021, CAL FIRE expanded its classifications to include Moderate and High hazard zones in addition to Very High zones. The updated maps identify fire hazard levels in areas not covered by state or federal fire services.

Using a scientific model, CAL FIRE assessed fire probability and behavior by analyzing factors such as fire history, vegetation, terrain, and weather conditions. These maps reflect hazard, meaning the likelihood of fire occurring, rather than risk, which considers actual vulnerability and mitigation efforts.

Under California Government Code Section 51179(3), local agencies are not permitted to reduce designated hazard levels but may increase them if necessary.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

No fiscal impact except staff time to prepare the staff report/ordinance and to publish the ordinance.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

This action is not considered a project under Section 15061(b)(3) of the California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines, and as such is exempt from environmental review.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Ordinance No. 1350 - An Uncodified Ordinance of the City of Folsom to Designate Fire Hazard Severity Zones in the Local Responsibility Area (LRA)
2. City of Folsom Local Responsibility Area Fire Hazard Severity Zones Map

Submitted,

Ken Cusano, Fire Chief