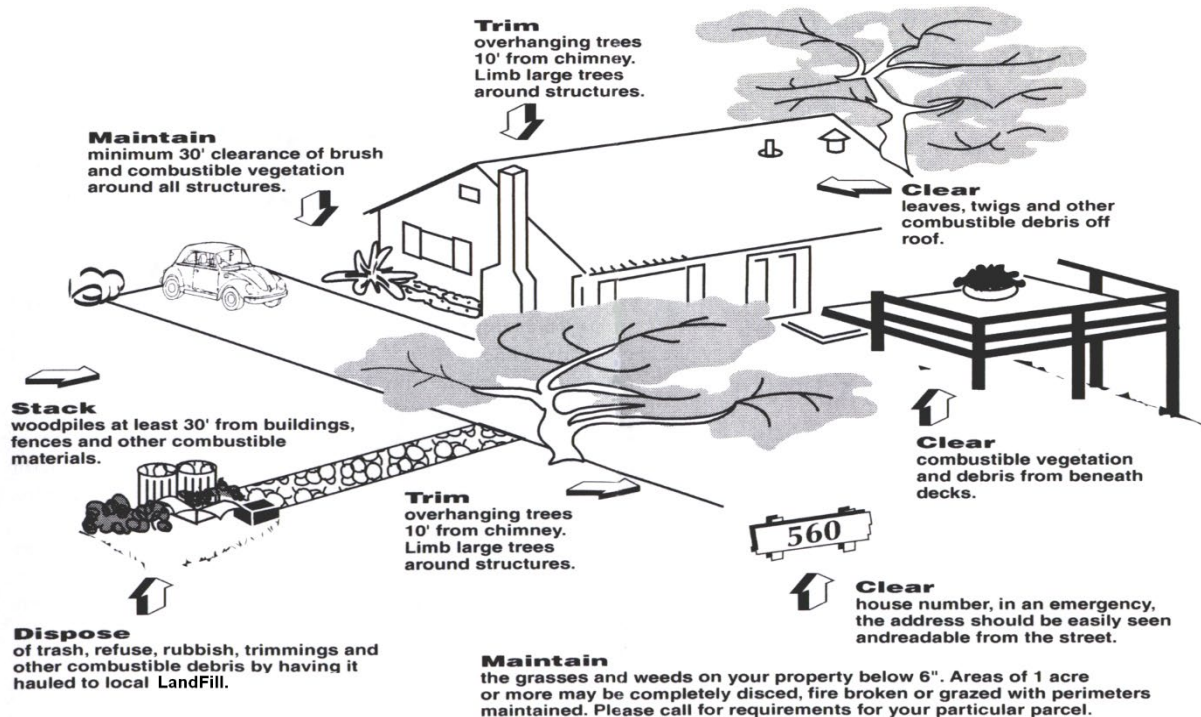


## MINIMUM FIRE SAFETY STANDARDS (MFSS)

1. **Vegetation must not exceed 6 inches in height any time after the compliance deadline.**
2. Maintain grasses and weeds below 6 inches for 10 feet horizontally on both sides of all roadways, including driveways and access routes. Roads and driveways must maintain a clearance of 10' W by 13'6" H for all vegetation.
3. Clear flammable vegetation a minimum of 30 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 one acre or less shall be completely abated. Parcels over one acre up 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 fuel 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 10 feet away from chimneys. Trim tree branches up from the ground to provide at least 6 feet of vertical clearance.
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. All grasses, including those purportedly fire resistant, must be maintained below 6" in height.

### Trees:

African Sumac  
California Pepper

### Shrubs:

Bearberry  
Carmel Creeper  
Carolina Cherry  
Catalina Cherry

### Escallonia

Hopseed Bush  
Lemonade Berry

### Groundcover:

Aaron's Beard  
Australian Daisy  
Candytuft  
Sterile Capeweed

### Freeway Daisy

Rock Rose (except Gum Variety)

# Fire Safety Through Vegetation Management

## Santa Clara County

Consumer and Environmental  
Protection Agency

Weed Abatement Program



1553 Berger Drive #1

San Jose, Ca 95112

Phone (408) 282-3145

Fax: (408) 286-2460

[SCC.WeedAbatement@cep.sccgov.org](mailto:SCC.WeedAbatement@cep.sccgov.org)

## The Santa Clara County Weed Abatement Program

The Santa Clara County Consumer and Environmental Protection Agency 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. Fees will be assessed for any property in the program. This is to cover the cost of the compliance inspection for the property. Properties that fail the compliance inspection will be charged a failed inspection fee, even if the resident completes the weed abatement. If the property requires abatement by the County contractor, the property owner will be responsible for the actual cost of abatement plus an administrative fee. Properties that meet and maintain the minimum fire safety standards will not be charged other than the annual fee.

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 a failed 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 the contractor's fees 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 compliance inspection will be charged a failed 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 releasing the work order.
- 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 Weed Abatement Program 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 Weed Abatement Program.

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

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

#### Q. The grasses planted on my property are fire resistant. Are they exempt from the Weed Abatement program?

A. No. Even grasses that possess some fire resistant qualities are not fire proof, and they can add fuel to any site that is subject to a fire. Additionally, fire resistant grasses are rarely found in a pure, homogenous stand but rather are usually found to occur mixed with other common introduced annual grasses that are highly flammable and hazardous in a fire event. Finally, many grasses occur in Santa Clara County and species identification is difficult in the field, especially after the spring when the reproductive portions required for identification have dried and dispersed. Weed Abatement Inspectors can only focus on the presence of grasses and weeds on your property and the Minimum Fire Safety Standards, and not on grass species identification. Therefore, all grasses are required to be below 6 inches in height.

#### 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.

### More FAQ:

#### 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 an annual fee to cover the cost of the compliance inspection. 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 additional fees. 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. Any 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 minimizes the volume of combustible material before the hazards increase and dries out completely 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.

#### Q. I have Grazing Animals do I need to perform abatement?

A. Grazing animals do not absolve you of your responsibilities to provide a fire safe condition on your property. You will need to check with our office to determine if grazing is adequate or if additional work is required.