



Date: April, 22, 2025

Honorable Mayor and Council Members:

Author and title: James Blattler, Emergency Services Program Manager

Title: **Introduction of Ordinance of New Fire Hazard Severity Zone Map and Municipal Code Chapter 15.03 Amendment Regarding Fire Hazard Severity Zone Classifications.**

Jen Callaway, Town Manager

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**Recommended Action:** That the Town Council Introduce Ordinance 2025-04, Adopting the State-Recommended Fire Hazard Severity Zone Map and Amending Chapter 15.03 of Truckee Municipal Code Regarding Fire Hazard Severity Zone Classifications.

**Discussion:**

As a result of deadly and destructive wildfires in California, the state has mandated the identification of wildfire hazard severity zones on both state and locally managed lands since the early 1990s. While initially the identification of these zones was centered around "Very High Fire Severity Zones", more recent catastrophic fires have resulted in additional regulations including the addition of both "moderate" and "high" zones that the State Fire Marshall is required to recommend to local jurisdictions for adoption. Additional regulations associated with these zones include materials and construction methods for exterior wildfire exposure, natural hazard real estate disclosures, 100-foot defensible space requirements, property development standards, and consideration during future general plan developments.

The first mapping of fire hazard severity zones within the Local Responsibility Areas was completed in 2007. The hazard maps have now been significantly updated to more accurately reflect the zones in California that are susceptible to wildfire. The new mapping process incorporated new science in local climate data and improved assessment modeling in determining hazard ratings.

The Town has several requirements related to these zones including making the State's zone recommendations available to the public for review and input within 30 days of receiving the recommended map, adopting the new map by way of ordinance within 120 days of receiving the updated map, and transmitting the ordinance and adopted map to the State Board of Forestry within 30 days of adoption. The Town has met the 30-day public accessibility and input requirement and must adopt the updated zones by ordinance by early June to meet the 120-day adoption requirement timeline.

While the Town does have the ability to increase the severity of the recommended zones, we are unable to reduce the severity. After reviewing the zones, staff does not recommend altering the CAL FIRE recommended zones, which were developed consistently state-wide, due to the lack of sufficient local evidence. Additionally, no public input was received by Town staff indicating public interest in increasing the severity designation of any zones.

**Changes to the Fire Hazard Severity Zone Map**

The number of acres identified as a “Very High Fire Severity Zone” increased by approximately 39% from the 2007 map to 16,104 acres, covering approximately 75% of the town’s jurisdiction. Additionally, 3,692 acres have been identified as a “High Fire Severity Zone” and 79 acres as a “Moderate Fire Severity Zone”. Outside of roughly 1,650 acres of federally owned land within the Town, which is not required to be mapped by CAL FIRE, the entire town of Truckee is identified in one of the three hazard zones.

### **Relevant Adoption Process Legal Requirements**

[Government Code 51178](#), Amended by SB 63, Effective January 1, 2022

Excerpt: *“The State Fire Marshal shall identify areas in the state as moderate, high, and very high fire hazard severity zones based on consistent statewide criteria and based on the severity of fire hazard that is expected to prevail in those areas.”*

[Government Code 51178.5](#), Amended by SB 63, Effective January 1, 2022

Excerpt: *“Within 30 days after receiving a transmittal from the State Fire Marshal that identifies fire hazard severity zones pursuant to Section 51178, a local agency shall make the information available for public review and comment. The information shall be presented in a format that is understandable and accessible to the general public, including, but not limited to, maps.”*

[Government Code 51179](#), Amended by AB 211, Effective September 27, 2022

Excerpt: *“(a) A local agency shall designate, by ordinance, moderate, high, and very high fire hazard severity zones in its jurisdiction within 120 days of receiving recommendations from the State Fire Marshal pursuant to Section 51178.*

*(b) (1) A local agency may, at its discretion, include areas within the jurisdiction of the local agency, not identified as very high fire hazard severity zones by the State Fire Marshal, as very high fire hazard severity zones following a finding supported by substantial evidence in the record that the requirements of Section 51182 are necessary for effective fire protection within the area.*

*(2) A local agency may, at its discretion, include areas within the jurisdiction of the local agency, not identified as moderate and high fire hazard severity zones by the State Fire Marshal, as moderate and high fire hazard severity zones, respectively.*

*(3) A local agency shall not decrease the level of fire hazard severity zone as identified by the State Fire Marshal for any area within the jurisdiction of the local agency, and, in exercising its discretion pursuant to paragraph (2), may only increase the level of fire hazard severity zone as identified by the State Fire Marshal for any area within the jurisdiction of the local agency.”*

[California Code of Regulations, Title 14, § 1280.02](#), Registered April 1, 2020

Excerpt: *“Within thirty (30) days of adopting a local ordinance designating VHFHSZ pursuant to Government Code section 51179(a), a local agency shall transmit a copy of the ordinance and a map depicting the adopted zones within the local agency to the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection (Board).”*

### **Priority:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Enhanced Communication	<input type="checkbox"/> Climate and Greenhouse Gas Reduction	<input type="checkbox"/> Housing
<input type="checkbox"/> Infrastructure Investment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Emergency and Wildfire Preparedness	<input type="checkbox"/> Core Service

### **Fiscal Impact:**

There will be minimal fiscal impacts to the Town associated with administering the ordinance and municipal code amendments including fees accompanying publications to meet public noticing requirements.

### **Public Communication:**

In addition to the standard noticing requirements for Council agendas, a number of public communication and outreach efforts were undertaken to ensure the community was well-informed on the fire hazard severity zone map adoption process, and requirements. The maps were first introduced and made available at the February 25, 2025 council meeting and published on a dedicated town webpage at, [www.townoftruckee.gov/FHSZupdate](http://www.townoftruckee.gov/FHSZupdate). Additionally, a KTKE/101.5 FM, Tahoe Truckee Radio, "Community Spotlight" segment on this subject was aired several times since February 25<sup>th</sup>. Also, a community information meeting was held at Town Hall on March 19, 2025, offering Spanish interpretation, which was both live-streamed and later published through Tahoe Truckee Media. Furthermore, direct outreach was also completed to local Firewise community leaders, Homeowners Associations, the Tahoe Sierra Board of Realtors, and the Contractors Association of Tahoe Truckee. Finally, staff shared information about the fire hazard severity zone map update on several Town social media accounts.

Additionally, a dedicated public comment email address was created to help streamline the public's ability to provide input on the mapping update. Relevant comments submitted to the email have been included in this report under Attachment 2.

### **Attachments:**

1. Draft Ordinance 2025-04 – Adopting the State-Recommended Fire Hazard Severity Zone Map and Amending Chapter 15.03 of Truckee Municipal Code Regarding Fire Hazard Severity Zone Classifications.
2. Public comment emails submitted to 'FHSZupdate@townoftruckee.gov'