

**SACRAMENTO METROPOLITAN FIRE DISTRICT  
FIRE PREVENTION STANDARD**

STANDARD

TITLE:

**Weed Abatement Requirements and Inspections**

STANDARD  
NUMBER:

11

EFFECTIVE DATE: 04/02/09

REVISION DATE: 02/21/2014

**Code References:** California Fire Code (CFC) Section 304.1.2, Section 1103.2.4; California Public Resources Code (PRC), Section 4291; Health & Safety (H&S) Section 14876 & 143879; Sacramento County Code (SCC) 17.12, Metro Fire Ordinance NO. 2014-01

**OBJECTIVE**

This standard outlines the weed abatement requirements and inspection procedures to reduce the risk of vegetation fuels which endanger public safety by creating a fire hazard.

**DEFINITIONS**

**Abatement:** The removal of combustible growth and material from property, including the investigation, inspection, preparation, service and/or publication or administrative notices and other related clerical costs, actual removal of weeds and/or rubbish whether performed by the Fire District or a contractor.

**Combustible Growth:** Annual grasses, weeds, vines, ferns or other vegetation that will support fire and its growth, intensity and spread that is not decorative or cultivated.

**Cost of Abatement:** Any and all costs incurred by the Fire District to enforce the Weed Ordinance including, but not limited to, investigation, inspection, preparation, service and/or publication or administrative notices and other related clerical costs, actual removal of weeds whether performed by Fire District or contractor.

**Cutting:** The use of rotating blades to reduce the height of combustible growth.

**Discing:** The turning of soil and combustible growth.

**Dry Season:** The time of year during which, based on seasonal weather pattern and precipitation averages. For the purposes of Weed Abatement Ordinance, the dry season is typically May – November, and is also characterized by lower humidity, lower fuel moisture, and higher daily temperatures, resulting in increased fire danger.

**Firebreak:** An area without combustible material that will support or communicate fire. Firebreaks are constructed by thorough disking or scraping the soil with a tractor or other similar means.

**Imminent Hazard:** The conditions constituting a fire hazard of such a nature that fire, life and safety of the public are substantially and imminently endangered thereby.

The following violations substantiate the declaration of an imminent fire hazard:

1. Vegetation approximately 4 feet high adjacent to a structure.
2. Homes adjacent to the property have wood shake shingle roofs.

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3. Due to mid-summer and dry weather conditions, the risk for fire is substantially above average in the Sacramento region.

**Regrowth:** Any combustible growth which returns after abatement.

**Vegetation:** Weeds, grass, vines or other growth that is capable of being ignited and endangering property, shall be cut down and removed by the owner or occupant of the premises.

**Weeds:** All vegetation growing upon streets or private property in this jurisdiction and includes any of the following:

1. Vegetation that bears seeds of a downy or wingy nature
2. Sagebrush, chaparral, and any other brush or weeds which attain such hard growth as to become, when dry, a fire menace to adjacent improved property.
3. Vegetation that is otherwise noxious or dangerous.
4. Poison oak and poison ivy when the conditions of growth are such as to constitute a menace to the public health.
5. Dry grass, stubble, brush, litter, or other flammable material which endangers the public safety by creating a fire hazard.

**PROCEDURE**

**I. REQUIREMENTS**

All dry grass, brush, vines or other dry vegetation shall be cleared and maintained for an area of not less than thirty feet (30) from all structures, combustible fences, vehicles and combustible storage. Additional clearances may be required when topographical or geographical conditions warrant said action. The methods of abatement listed in section II are to be used.

**II. METHODS OF ABATEMENT**

**A. Discing**

1. The discs shall be set at an angle sufficient to cut the sod loose and adequately bury the dead growth of weeds, grass, or noxious vegetation existing at the time.
2. Discing shall be done each time the dead growth exceeds six (6) inches in height.
3. Discing may include roto-tilling or cultivating.

**B. Mowing**

1. Dead weeds shall not exceed two (2) inches in height at the completion of the mowing.
2. Mowing shall be done each time the dead growth exceeds six (6) inches in height.

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3. Combustible material produced by mowing shall be removed from the property.

**III. PARCELS ONE ACRE OR LESS**

- A. Total weed abatement of the parcel is required.

**IV. PARCELS GREATER THAN ONE ACRE**

- A. A firebreak thirty (30) feet in width shall be maintained around the perimeter of the property.
- B. Intersecting firebreaks sixty (60) feet in width shall divide the parcel into four approximately equal sections.

**V. PROPERTY ZONED FOR AGRICULTURAL USE**

- A. A firebreak thirty (30) feet in width shall be maintained on agricultural land that abuts structures, wooden fences, roads, etc.
- B. Cut vegetation or tree and shrub cutting piles that result from the clearing operation shall be removed from the property.
- C. All stubble or residual growth must be abated as soon after harvest as possible.
- D. The firebreak shall be maintained even if a valuable crop is planted on the parcel.

**VI. NOTIFICATION, INSPECTION TIMELINES, AND FEES**

- A. When a new complaint is received, a pre-inspection is completed to determine if the property needs to be added to the inspections, and notification process for abatement.
  1. Compliant property – removed from the list
  2. Non compliant property – First Notice is mailed to property owner
- B. 30 days after the first notice is mailed, a first inspection is completed. If the property is noncompliant at the first inspection a second notice is mailed.
- C. 15 days after the second notice is mailed, a second inspection is completed. If the property is noncompliant at the second inspection, a Notice to Abate Notice is posted on the property and a Notice to Abate Notification letter is mailed.
- D. 7 days after the Notice to Abate Notice has been mailed a final inspection is completed. If the property is noncompliant at the final inspection a list of non compliant parcels is sent to the Community Risk Reduction Division's identified Weed Abatement Contractor for abatement.

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- E. After the Initial Inspection, each inspection thereafter is billable. Failure to comply with each notification will result in a charge of 15% of a \$143.00 administrative fee as well as a charge of 15% of a \$126.00 Inspection Fee for a non compliant first inspect; and if not corrected a subsequent fee for each follow up inspection, and the total cost of remediation (abatement) billable at the end of compliance.

Quick Reference:

Initial Inspection

First Notice

First Inspection – fee charged if noncompliant

Second Notice

Second Inspection – fee charged (& Notice to Abate Posted)

Final Notice/Notice to Abate Property Notice

Final Inspection – fee charged

Contractor contacted to abate – fee charge for total cost of abatement

**VII. INSPECTION PROCEDURES**

- A. The reported hazard must be clearly visible from the street, public way, or a location where the inspector has been invited by the property's owner or occupant.
- B. Inspections of backyards without permission are not permitted.
- C. Climbing fences is not permitted.
- D. An inspection of a property from a neighboring property or building is not permitted.
- E. The Weed Abatement Inspection Form shall be filled out for each inspected parcel.
- F. A picture of each inspected non compliant parcel shall be taken.

**VIII. VACANT HOMES**

- A. All issues with vacant homes in Sacramento County need to be referred to Sacramento County Code Enforcement at (916) 875-5656.
- B. All issues with vacant homes in Citrus Heights need to be referred to Citrus Heights Code Enforcement at (916) 725-2845.
- C. All issues with vacant homes in Rancho Cordova need to be referred to Rancho Cordova Code Enforcement at (916) 851-8770.

**IX. IMMINENT HAZARDS**

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- A. Metro Fire will notify the County of Sacramento Code Enforcement Division when an imminent hazard exists on a parcel in the unincorporated areas of Sacramento County.



Bill Daniels, Assistant Chief/Fire Marshal