



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
AGENDA LETTER

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors  
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101  
(805) 568-2240

**Department Name:** Fire  
**Department No.:** 031  
**For Agenda Of:** October 2, 2018  
**Placement:** Departmental  
**Estimated Time:** 45 Minutes  
**Continued Item:** No  
**If Yes, date from:**  
**Vote Required:** Majority

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**TO:** Board of Supervisors

**FROM:** Department Eric Peterson, Fire Chief  
Director (805) 681-5507  
Contact Info: Rob Heckman, Deputy Fire Chief  
(805) 681-5501

**SUBJECT:** Fuels Management and Community Defensible Space in the County of Santa Barbara

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**County Counsel Concurrence**

As to form: Yes

**Other Concurrence:**

As to form: N/A

**Auditor-Controller Concurrence**

As to form: N/A

**Recommended Actions:**

That the Board of Supervisors:

- a) Receive an informational update with recommendations on Fuels Management and Community Defensible Space in Santa Barbara County presented by the Fire Chief and Fire Department staff with assistance from Federal (Los Padres National Forest) and State (Cal Fire) partners. Additionally, Planning and Development staff will summarize the proposed Safety Element update to the County's Comprehensive Plan, related to pre-fire planning.
- b) Determine that the proposed actions are administrative activities that do not involve commitment to any specific project, and are therefore not a project as defined by State California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines Section 15378 (b)(5).

**Summary Text:**

The Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors requested that the Fire Department prepare and present a report on fuels management and community defensible space in Santa Barbara County. The need to create a community defensible space plan requiring commitments from Local, State and Federal agencies has been discussed among fire agencies in the past.

The purpose of this presentation is to provide the Board with updated information regarding the current and future state of vegetation management in our County from the perspective of Local, State and Federal partners. In addition, information on new State legislation and Cal Fire performance measures, which have local implications, will be reviewed.

**Background:**

“Vegetation Management” or “Fuels Management,” are broad terms used in the fire service to describe various proactive (prior to emergency fire suppression) methods implemented to alter vegetation in order to improve the odds of success for future firefighting efforts. Managed or controlled burns, the creation of fuel breaks, roadside grass clearing, and neighborhood chipping programs are all examples of vegetation management. Vegetation can be temporarily or permanently removed using a variety of methods which may include the use of hand crews with hand tools and chainsaws, the use of heavy equipment such as bulldozers or masticators, and the use of area-constrained goats. In some cases, a combination of all of these methods may be used. Prior to the implementation of larger planned fuel management projects, some level of stakeholder and environmental review becomes necessary.

The topic of Fuels Management has received increased focus due to recent, more frequent, large-scale wildfires locally and statewide. These events, coupled with the 1/9/18 Debris Flow, have created a new level of urgency among fire agencies to pursue preventative measures more aggressively. A changing climate and extended fire seasons have added to this urgency by forcing fire agencies to focus primarily on fire suppression, rather than on meaningful fuel treatment programs. Managing the fuel load, particularly in areas adjacent to communities, has become critically important as we become more vulnerable to the impacts of uncontrolled vegetation fires.

**Attachments:**

- A. Santa Barbara County Fire Dept. Vegetation Management Program PowerPoint Presentation
- B. Glossary and References
- C. State of California Executive Order B-52-18
- D. Senate Bill No. 1260
- E. Assembly Bill No. 2911

**Authored by:**

Eric L. Peterson, Fire Chief

**cc:**

Barney Melekian, Assistant CEO  
Dianne Black, Interim Director, Planning and Development  
Rob Hazard, Deputy Fire Marshal