



SB XX – Dodd

Wildfire Safety: Defensible Space & Building Standard Enhancement

Summary

SB XX directs the Office of the State Fire Marshal to perform several tasks which will significantly increase awareness of and compliance with defensible space requirements.

Background

There is widespread agreement that fire-safety efforts for new and existing structures should focus on three general areas, 1) fire-resistive building standards, 2) defensible space around structures and 3) vegetation management in neighboring undeveloped areas. For over twenty years, California statute has required the provision and maintenance of “defensible space” of 100 feet around the perimeter of a structure, or to the property line, whichever is shorter. Unfortunately, very few local jurisdictions have an effective and ongoing program of defensible space enforcement. In addition, there is a need to educate building occupants and owners and local code enforcement personnel on the requirements of defensible space and how best to maintain this area around specific structures.

Existing Law

Existing law requires:

- The provision and ongoing maintenance of “defensible space” around structures that is free of combustible material that could lead to the ignition of the structure during wildfire conditions.

- The Director of Cal Fire and local agencies to designate areas with their jurisdiction as being high fire severity zones.
- The Office of the State Fire Marshal to propose and for the Building Standards commission to adopt wildland-urban interface building standards and to update these standards as needed.

This Bill

This bill would do the following:

- Require the Office of the State Fire Marshal (SFM) to develop a model defensible space ordinance for consideration by local jurisdictions as a possible mandatory ordinance.
- Provide authority to local jurisdictions to recover related costs if they choose to adopt a mandatory defensible space ordinance.
- Require the SFM to develop and make available on the internet a Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) Building Standards Compliance training manual for use in training local code enforcement personnel.
- Require the SFM to develop a guidance document for the maintenance of defensible space around structures and to submit it to the Building Standards Commission for consideration for adoption into the California Green Building Standards.



- Require the SFM to develop and update on a regular basis a WUI Products Handbook listing products and construction systems which comply with California's WUI Fire Safety building standards.
- Authorize the SFM to expend funds, upon appropriation by the Legislature, from the Building Standards Administration Special Revolving Fund to cover the costs incurred in complying with this bill.

Support

California Building Industry Association
(sponsor)

Opposition

None on file

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