

11. EXISTING BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES

Obviously, existing buildings and structures are exempt from most new fire safety requirements. It is extremely expensive to upgrade several miles of road when building a single house. Yet, when a new subdivision is proposed at the end of an existing road, the jurisdiction may require upgrading the entire road under CEQA, based upon a public safety need. Yet, in the majority of cases, once it is built, it does not have to change.

There are exceptions, however, including the requirement that if more than 50 percent of a roof covering is replaced within a year, the entire roof must be replaced with the appropriate roof covering required within that particular zone. Many local jurisdictions require some retroactive application when triggered by a major remodel or specific life safety activity. Any homeowner who is remodeling should be encouraged to adopt reasonable fire safe standards as reconstruction occurs.

Efforts to gather homeowner support to upgrade roads and other infrastructure may be approached through a local homeowners' association or road improvement district. Individual adoption of defensible space can be triggered through direct application of multi-media fire safety programs and peer pressure. Demonstration activities and "how-to" presentations can convince many that the cost is minimal and the gains are significant. Neighborhood or block clean-up parties can stimulate interest and motivate large numbers of people to get involved and protect themselves.

Fuel and vegetation modification practices discussed in an earlier chapter are readily available for individual as well as community or neighborhood protection. Using roads and perimeter areas surrounding a neighborhood, minor fuel modification may be enough to establish a reasonable defensible space.

Information relative to the Bates Bill, State Fire Marshal "Model Ordinance for Defensibility of Space and Structures," and the Brown Bill is included as Appendices G, H, and I, respectively. Extensive information on these items is also available in the *Wildland Fire Hazard Assessment* report, which can be found at <http://www.prefire.ucfpl.ucop.edu/izhazard.htm>.