SECTION IV: PRE-FIRE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

A: FIRE PREVENTION

- ENGINEERING & STRUCTURE IGNITABILITY

The Department's Prevention Services Bureau consists of three (3) Divisions: Health Hazardous Material, Fire Prevention and Forestry Divisions.

The **Health Hazardous Materials Division** mission is to protect the public health and the environment throughout Los Angeles County from accidental releases and improper handling, storage, transportation, and disposal of hazardous materials and wastes through coordinated efforts of inspections, emergency response, enforcement, and site mitigation oversight. In 1981, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors established the Hazardous Materials Control Program in the Department of Health Services for the inspection of businesses generating hazardous waste. In 1991, the program merged into the Fire Department and it became the Health Hazardous Materials Division (HHMD). All Hazardous Material Specialists are sworn Los Angeles County Deputy Health Officers.

The **Fire Prevention Division** is under the supervision of the County's Fire Marshal and the Deputy Fire Marshal. The Fire Prevention Division focuses on educating the community about the benefits of proper safety practices and identifying and eliminating all types of hazardous conditions, which pose a threat to life, the environment and property. The Fire Department covers a diverse and unique area of responsibilities as related to Fire Prevention. Widespread and diverse activities of commercial, industrial and residential development and operations are processed and inspected. New processes and products must be analyzed and codes and inspections kept current. Numerous and widespread fires must be investigated and the information reentered into the system to update and improve the safety of the community and our personnel. The Fire Prevention Division is responsible for conducting plan checks for building, processes and fire extinguishing systems. The Division coordinates with Building and Safety officials, Federal, State, City and County officials the implementation of the building (Wildland Urban Interface and Chapter 7A) and the County Fire code, Title 32.

The **Fire Prevention Special Units Section** is comprised of seven separate specialized units:
Petroleum/Chemical Unit conducts fire safety inspections and issue permits for major plants manufacturing, using and storing hazardous materials and explosives.
Schools and Institutions Unit conducts annual fire/life safety inspections in all public, private, and parochial schools, private and community colleges, child day care centers, acute and convalescent care hospitals, surgery centers, outpatient dialysis clinics, residential care facilities, assisted living centers, adult day facilities, local detention facilities and jails, county detention camps, and organized church and school camps.
Fire Investigation Unit conducts investigations of major alarm fires and other fires to determine the cause or investigate suspected arson. They interview witnesses, collect evidence, write reports, and conduct training programs for Departmental personnel.
Codes & Ordinances Unit conducts research, answers requests for information and maintains the Department's legal and historic library. They propose code changes to the

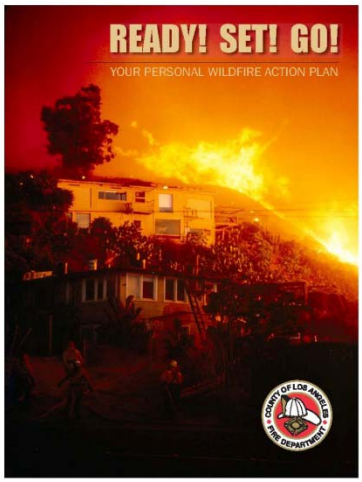
Uniform Fire Code and Uniform Building Code and meet with architects and other government officials.
County Facilities Unit is responsible for plan check and field inspection activity for new construction projects for many of the 36 Los Angeles County Departments. They act as the Department's liaison and/or represent county facilities outside of our jurisdiction, such as the Disney Concert Hall and the LAC-USC Medical Center reconstruction and addition.

The **Fire Prevention Engineering Section** consists of the following**:**
Building Plan Check Unit has the responsibilities of performing nonstructural fire safety plan review and approving architectural plans for various complex occupancies.
Fire Sprinkler Plan Check Unit is responsible for providing plan review service for all structures requiring an automatic fire sprinkler system, fire pump and on-site hydrants. They also review and approve all types of fire protection systems.
Fire Alarm Unit performs plan review services on all structures requiring a fire alarm or smoke management systems. They review and approve all types of fire alarm systems and assist with on-site inspections and testing of complex alarm and smoke management systems.

State Law requires the use of ignition resistant building methods and materials as a measure to reduce structure ignitability for new buildings located in any Fire Hazard Severity Zone (FHSZ) within SRA, any local agency VHFHSZ (very high fire hazard severity zone), or any Wildland-Urban Interface Fire Area designated by the enforcing agency. The County of Los Angeles Fire Department staff refers to the most current and adopted County of Los Angeles Fire Hazard Severity Zone maps to identify the Fire Hazard Severity Zones and Wildland-Urban Interface Fire Areas for the unincorporated County.

-INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

The Public Information Officer develops specific programs, educational materials, and public statements. Ultimately public education is the responsibility of all members of the Fire Department. Each section interacts with the public and is responsible for increasing the public's awareness of wildfire safety and preparedness. Through public involvement and collaboration, positive relationships are fostered throughout the County. The Department uses several publications to provide safety information to the citizens of the County of Los Angeles. Among them are:



Ready! Set! Go!:

http://fire.lacounty.gov/SafetyPreparedness/ReadySetGo/pdf/Ready%20Set%20Go%2009.pdf

Arson Watch And Resident Education (A.W.A.R.E.):
http://fire.lacounty.gov/ProgramsEvents/PDFs/A.W.A.R.E.pdf

Exit Drills In The Home (E.D.I.T.H.):
http://fire.lacounty.gov/FirePrevention/PDFs/EDITH.pdf

Water Awareness Training for Children in the Home (W.A.T.C.H.):
http://fire.lacounty.gov/ProgramsEvents/PDFs/W.A.T.C.H%20in%20English.pdf

4th of July Safety Tips:
http://fire.lacounty.gov/PressRoom/PDFs/fw_english.pdf

Be Flood Aware:
http://fire.lacounty.gov/ProgramsEvents/PDFs/storm.pdf

Brush Clearance:
http://fire.lacounty.gov/PressRoom/PDFs/Brush%20Clearance%20Tips.pdf

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT):
http://fire.lacounty.gov/ProgramsEvents/PECERT.asp

County of Los Angeles Fuel Modification Guidelines:
http://fire.lacounty.gov/Forestry/PDF/Fuel%20Modification%20Plan%20Guidelines%208-10-11.pdf

For a complete list of the Department's public education materials; please visit:
http://fire.lacounty.gov/ProgramsEvents/PEPublicEducation.asp

For a complete list of wildland urban interface fire prevention education materials; please visit:
http://fire.lacounty.gov/Forestry/Forestry.asp

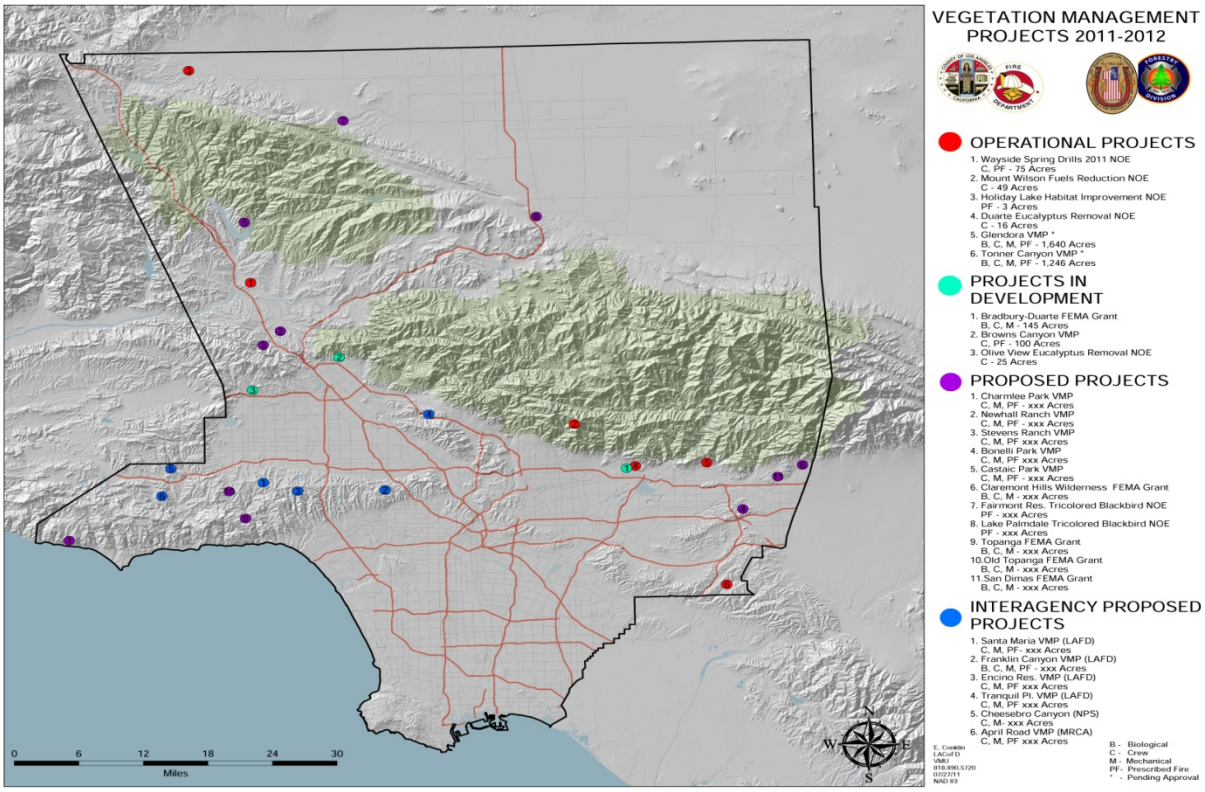
Additional Wildland Urban Interface information and brochures are available through the Forestry Division's Interpretive Unit at (818) 890-5723

B. VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

As the population of Los Angeles County increases, further expansion of residential areas into the Wildland-Urban interface is inevitable. Panoramic views, wildlife, fresh air, and solitude are just a few of the reasons that tempt people to locate in the brush areas of Los Angeles County. The rewards may be numerous, but the increased risk of wildland fires, flooding, and erosion poses a serious threat to life and property.

The County of Los Angeles Fire Department created the Vegetation Management Program in 1979 to develop strategies for responding to the growing fire hazard problem. These include:

- An ongoing effort to analyze the history and effects of wildland fires in Los Angeles County
- Development of Fuel management projects with stakeholders, including cities, community groups, and other agencies; Experimentation with different methods of reducing or removing fuels in fire prone areas as well as the evaluation of the environmental impacts and effects of these practices.
- Vegetation management, as it relates to wildland fire, refers to the total or partial removal of high fire hazard grasses, shrubs, or trees. In addition to fire hazard reduction, vegetation management has other benefits. These include increased water yields, improved habitat for wildlife, reduction of invasive exotic plant species, and open access for recreational purposes. Vegetation Management in the Wildland-Urban Interface of Los Angeles County.
- The vegetation management fire hazard reduction projects in Los Angeles County are implemented countywide.



The **Forestry Division** Since it inception in 1911, the Forestry Division of the County of Los Angeles Fire Department has been involved in the conservation and protection of natural resources through its forestry programs. The Forestry Division is comprised of three sections: Operations, Natural Resources, and Brush Clearance. The employees of the Forestry Division serve the citizens by using their knowledge to preserve and enhance the environment for the benefit of all residents of Los Angeles County. The Forestry Division is responsible for the review of environmental documents related to development and protection of oak tree resources, development of vegetation management projects, coordination of wildland fire planning, enforcement of the Department's brush clearance program, review of fuel modification plans, support to Fire Safe Councils and implementation of the California Strategic Fire Plan.

The Forestry Division's Environmental Review Unit works with the County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning in implementing existing environmental ordinances. The unit personnel review all County Oak Tree Permit applications submitted to the Department of Regional Planning and develop recommendations for implementation. Additionally, the unit personnel produce environmental documentation and recommendations such as non-significant impact documents, negative declarations and mitigation measures consistent with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) mandates for construction projects and developments. The Environmental Review Unit ensures that the statutory responsibilities of the County of Los Angeles Fire Department, Forestry Division are addressed in the project planning phase.

The **Brush Clearance Program** is a joint effort between the County of Los Angeles Fire Department and the County of Los Angeles Department of Agricultural

Commissioner/Weights and Measures, Weed Hazard and Pest Abatement Bureau (Weed Abatement Division). This unified enforcement legally declares both improved and unimproved properties a public nuisance, and where necessary, requires the clearance of hazardous vegetation. These measures create "Defensible Space" for effective fire protection of property, life and the environment. The Department's Brush Clearance Unit enforces the Fire Codes as it relates to brush clearance on improved parcels, coordinates inspections and compliance efforts with fire station personnel, and provides annual brush clearance training to fire station personnel.

The **Fuel Modification Unit** objective is to create the Defensible Space necessary for effective fire protection in newly constructed and/or remodeled homes within the Department's Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZ). Fuel modification reduces the radiant and convective heat, and provides valuable defensible space for firefighters to make an effective stand against an approaching fire front. Fuel modification zones are strategically placed as a buffer to open space, or areas of natural vegetation and generally would occur surrounding the perimeter of a subdivision, commercial development, or isolated development of a single-family dwelling.

The fuel modification plan identifies specific zones within a property which are subject to fuel modification. A fuel modification zone is a strip of land where combustible native or ornamental vegetation has been modified and/or partially or totally replaced with drought-tolerant, low-fuel-volume plants. The County of Los Angeles Fuel Modification Guidelines can be found at http://fire.lacounty.gov/Forestry/PDF/Fuel%20Modification%20Plan%20Guidelines%208-10-11.pdf

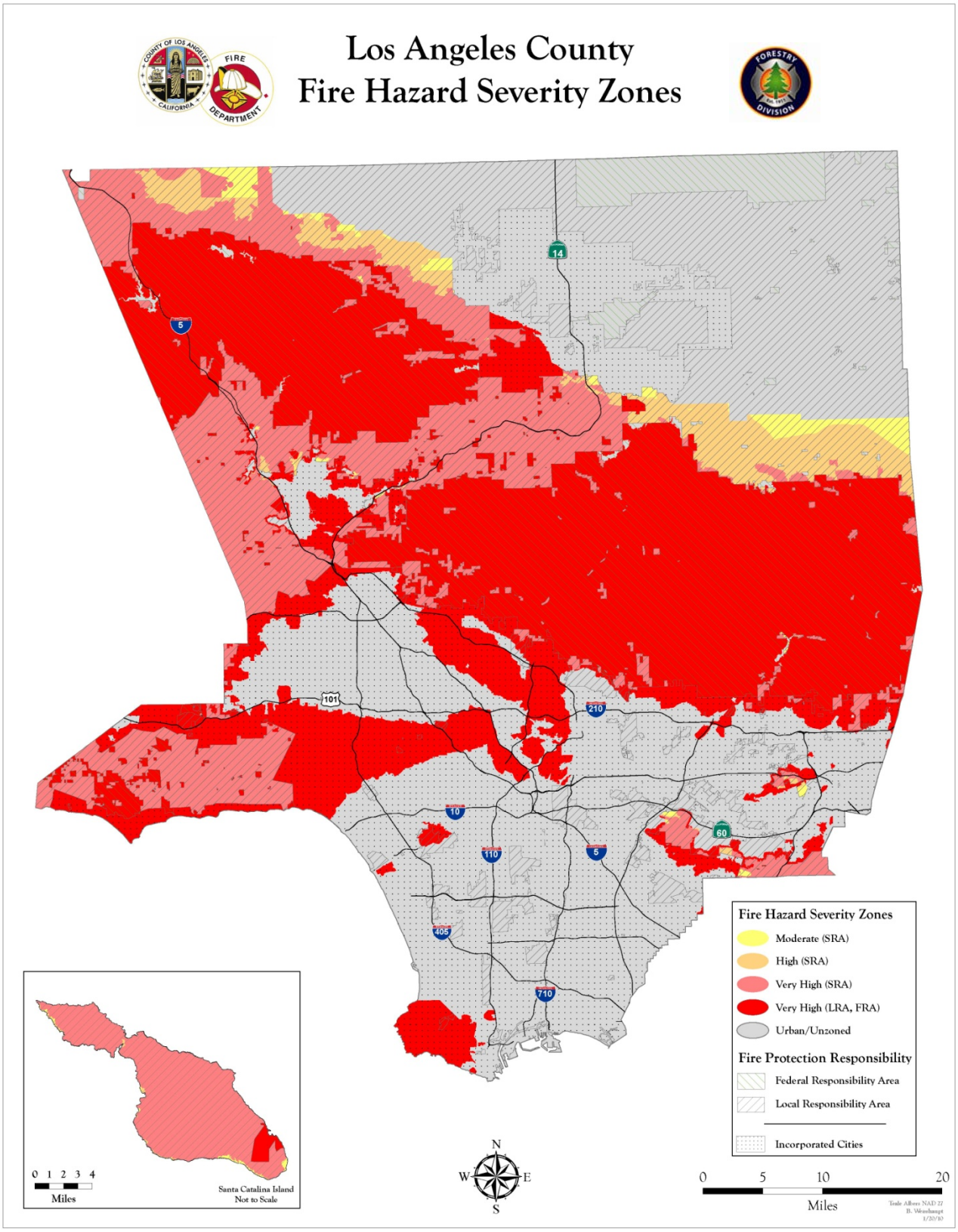
The Forestry Division's Fuel Modification Unit provides guidelines and reviews the landscape and irrigation plans submitted by the property owner for approval before construction or remodeling of a structure. The fuel modification plans vary in complexity and reflect the fire history, the amount and type of vegetation, the arrangement of the fuels, topography, local weather patterns, and construction, design and placement of structures.

The Forestry Division's **Fire Plan Unit** is in charge of implementing the California Strategic Fire Plan in Los Angeles County. The State Board of Forestry and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) have drafted a comprehensive document for wildland fire protection in California. The planning process defines a level of service measurement, considers assets at risk, incorporates the cooperative inter-dependent relationships of wildland fire protection providers, provides for public stakeholder involvement, and creates a fiscal framework for policy analysis.

The County of Los Angeles Fire Department is one of six Contract Counties that maintain a contractual relationship with CAL FIRE and utilizes the California Strategic Fire Plan within Los Angeles County as the primary wildland fire protection plan. This is the first statewide fire plan developed in concert between the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection and CAL FIRE. The 2010 Strategic Fire Plan builds upon the concept first developed in the 1996 California Fire Plan. The 2010 Strategic Fire Plan is written so that each goal builds upon the previous one. Over time, each supporting

objective will have measurement criteria to evaluate accomplishments and related effectiveness. Public Resources Code §4114 and §4130 authorize the Board to establish a fire plan which, among other things, establishes the levels of statewide fire protection services for State Responsibility Area (SRA) lands. These levels of service recognize other fire protection resources at the federal and local level that collectively provide a regional and statewide emergency response capability. In addition, California's integrated mutual aid fire protection system provides fire protection services through automatic and mutual aid agreements for fire incidents across all ownerships.

The most effective way to limit damage and loss due to wildfire is to prevent all but the most blatant ignitions due to arson or unforeseeable circumstances. The focus of the entire Department is on prevention through educational programs, development and enforcement of fire codes and building codes in the Fire Hazard Severity Zones, Pre-Fire Planning, Vegetation Management, Brush Clearance, Environmental Review and Fuel Modification Programs. These programs are focused on awareness and mitigation of fire causes, fire spread potential, total costs and effects of fire damage associated with the protection of life, property and the environment. The Department's Fire Plan Unit coordinates the efforts and activities of these programs with the intent of creating efficient and timely Pre-Fire Management projects.


Los Angeles County
Fire Hazard Severity Zones
Fire Hazard Severity Zones
Moderate (SRA)
High (SRA)
Very High (SRA)
Very High (LRA, FRA)
Urban/Unzoned
Fire Protection Responsibility
Federal Responsibility Area
Local Responsibility Area
Incorporated Cities
0 1 2 3 4
Miles
Santa Catalina Island
Not to Scale
N
W
E
S
0 5 10 20
Miles