

SECTION IV: PRE FIRE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

A: FIRE PREVENTION SERVICES DIVISION (FIRE MARSHAL)

The Fire Prevention Services Division is broken into three main sections: Prevention, Investigation, and Vegetation Management. The Fire Prevention Services Division is under the supervision of the Fire Marshal and the Deputy Fire Marshal. The ultimate goal of the Fire Prevention Services Division is to provide for public safety by reducing the number and severity of fires countywide through education, development standards and plan review, defensible space requirements and enforcement, permitting, investigations, and code enforcement.

WILDLAND IGNITION

Understanding the root causes of wildland fires as well as the County's local fire history is a critical first step in developing the necessary policies and actions which can mitigate this threat. The causes of wildland fires are linked to two elements: 1) the ignition source which starts the fire, and 2) the fuel which the fire feeds on in order to further propagate itself.

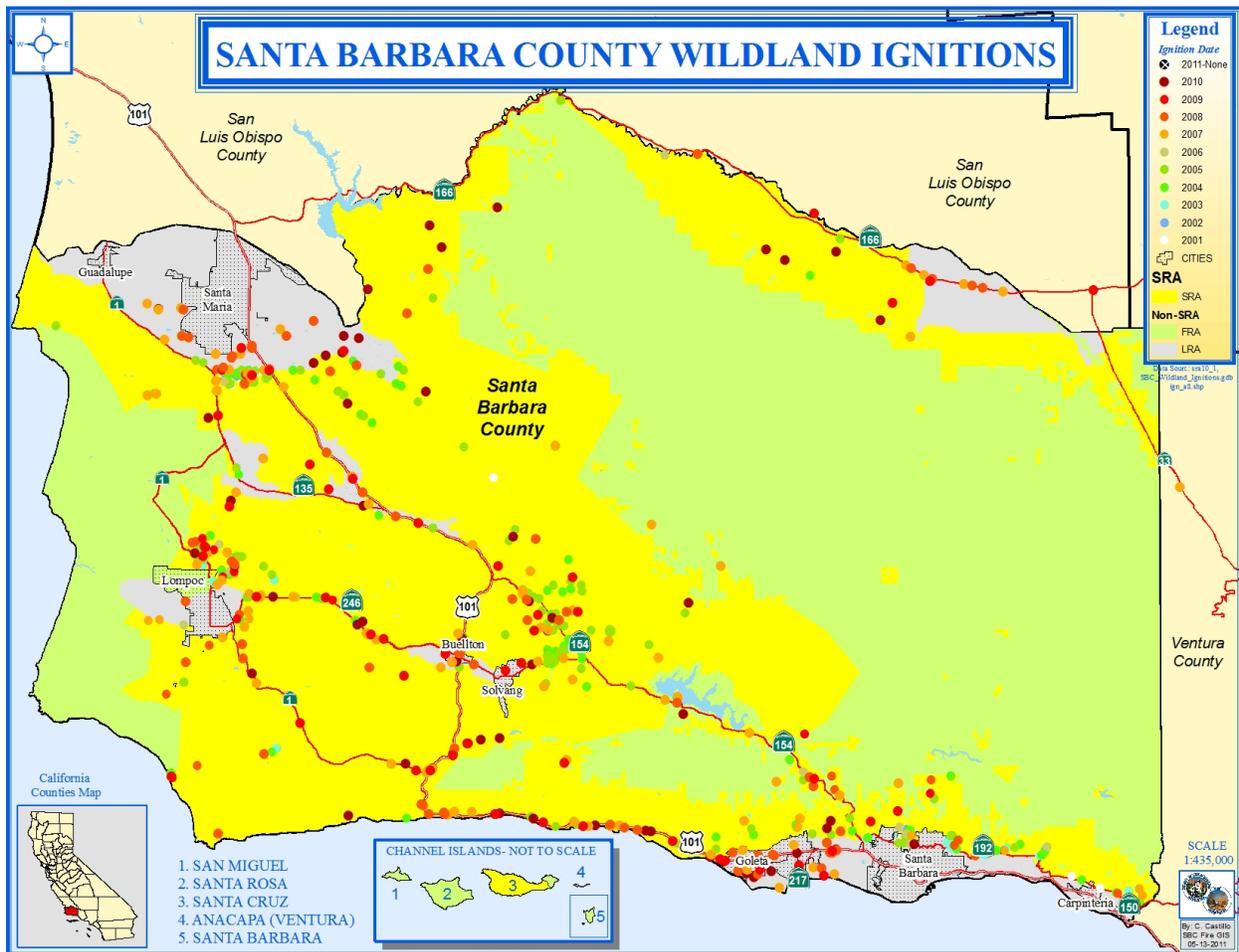


Figure 7

The map on the previous page (figure 7) is a visual representation of where wildland ignitions occurred over the last ten years on SRA and LRA lands. The chart below (table 3) represents the break down by cause of fires occurring over the last ten years.

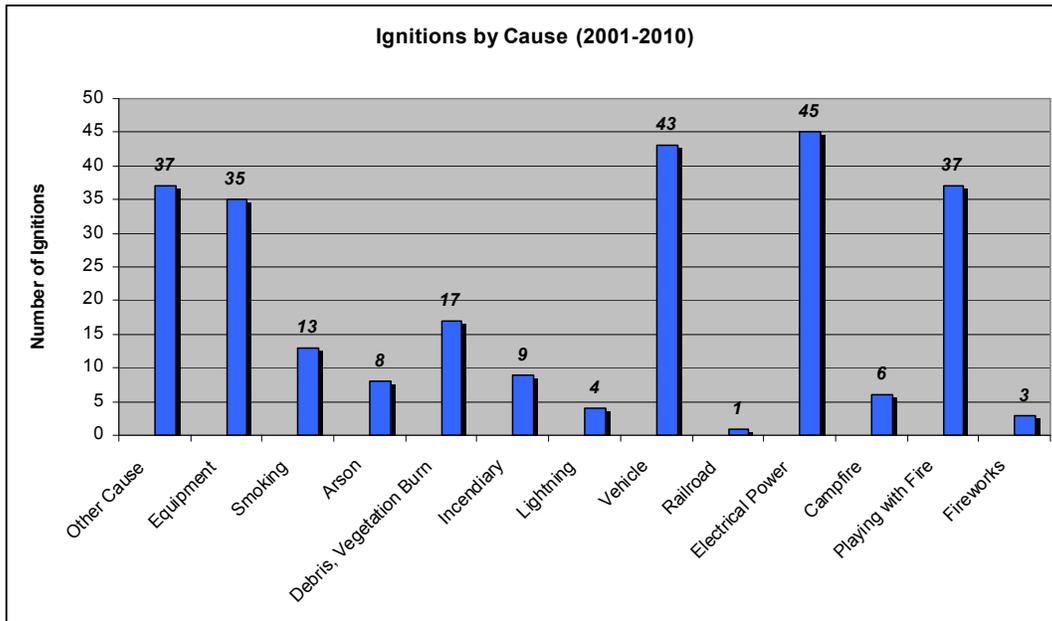


Table 3 *Ignitions by Cause*

Of the six hundred and sixty-six wildland ignitions that occurred from 2001-2010, four hundred and eight were undetermined and not represented in the table 3. The ignitions data is used to prioritize education programs and identify the need for additional laws and ordinances.

- ENGINEERING & STRUCTURE IGNITABILITY (Prevention/New Development)

PREVENTION SECTION

Development in Hazardous Areas

Development in the wildland urban interface provides for a myriad of issues that must be and are addressed through development standards and land use planning. Through a collaborative effort, Santa Barbara County Planning and Development staff and Santa Barbara County Fire Prevention staff work to insure that current building codes, fire codes, State and County policies, statutes, and regulations are followed in new development in the wildland urban interface. Land use planning must recognize the hazards and treat them as constraints in the planning process. Under the California Environmental Quality Act, local County action is directed to achieve a balance between natural processes and urban uses in order to create and maintain conditions of productive harmony. Consequently, the County has ample legal authority to regulate land use and development in order to reduce fire hazard.

The County uses planning to minimize these fire hazards by requiring elevated development standards within especially vulnerable areas (in both the SRA and LRA). These standards include the requirement for fire resistive construction materials, development of adequate emergency access routes, access to fire suppression water supplies (fire hydrants or water tanks), and defensible space around structures (whether inhabited or not). The implementation of these standards help minimize, but not entirely eliminate, the hazards from wildland fires.

In Santa Barbara County, Planning and Development staff work together with County Fire staff to insure development standards are adequate to protect people and structures from the threat of wildfire.

Fire Development Standards

State Law⁷ also 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 Planning & Development Department staff refers to the most current and adopted County of Santa Barbara Fire Hazard Severity Zone maps to identify the Fire Hazard Severity Zones and Wildland-Urban Interface Fire Areas for the unincorporated County (see figure 8).

⁷ Fire Ignition Resistant Construction Methods California Code of Regulations, Title 24, Part 2-California Building Code (CBC)

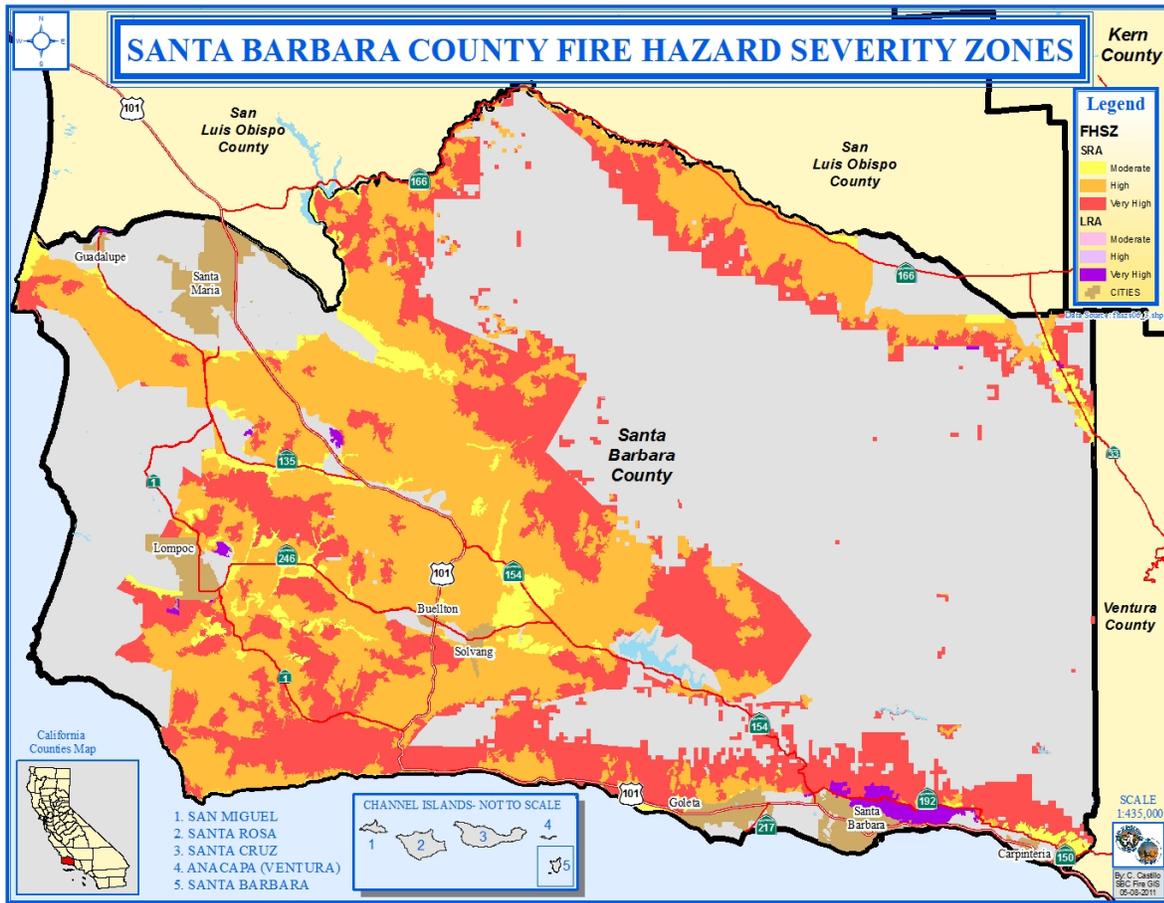


Figure 8

The Fire Prevention section maintains Development Standards which serve as control measures designed to promote fire protection and comply with State law⁸. The adoption of the California Fire Code and Fire Department Development Standards, codified in County Code Chapter 15-Fire Prevention, cover a range of development topics required for new construction. The table below provides a summary of Development Standards 1 through 7. These Development Standards are updated by County Fire as needed to ensure compliance with State law.

Santa Barbara County Fire Department Development Standards⁹	
Development Standard #1 Private Roadway and Driveway Standards	Establishes minimum standards for driveways and private roads. These standards outline minimum road widths and vegetation clearance designed to provide fire vehicles access to residences and associated structures.
Development Standard #2 Fire Hydrant Spacing and Water Flow Rates	Establishes fire hydrant spacing, discharge outlet configuration and flow rate requirements. Flow rate standards are used when calculating peakload water supply requirements for one-and-two family dwelling units.

⁸ Requirement of Title 24 of the California Code of Regulations, Part 9 California Fire Code. Additionally, Section 13108.5(c) of the Health and Safety Code allows local agencies to revise development standards contained in the California Fire Code in order to meet unique local conditions.

⁹ <http://www.sbcfire.com/fp/dr/index.html>

Development Standard #3 Stored Water Fire Protection Systems Serving One and Two-Family Dwellings	Establishes standards for stored water fire protection systems serving one and two-family dwellings.
Development Standard #4 Automatic Fire Sprinkler System Standards	Establishes standards for automatic fire sprinkler systems.
Development Standard #5 Automatic Alarm System Standards	Establishes standards for automatic alarm systems.
Development Standard #6 Vegetation Management Plan	Establishes standards for vegetation management plans.
Development Standard #7 Access Gates	Establishes standards for gates on private roads and private driveway access points.

INVESTIGATION AND INSPECTION SECTION

The Investigation staff is responsible for fire origin and cause investigation, code enforcement, California Fire Code permit issuance, and engine company support with inspections. Santa Barbara County Fire engine companies are responsible for performing building inspections and maintaining inspection records for their district.

Strategies:

- 100% fire cause determination
- identify needed regulations
- identify need for targeted education programs (i.e. juvenile fire starters, proper equipment use, etc.)
- reduce hazards through permit process
- reduce hazards through building inspections
- code enforcement
- cost recovery
- engine company resource

- 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.

B: VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

The Vegetation Management section is responsible for the Defensible Space Program, GIS and mapping services, pre-fire planning, and vegetation management programs.

Defensible Space Program

Establishing defensible space around structures is one of the most powerful tools for preventing fire hazards and is therefore required by both County regulations and State law. The California Fire Code Chapter 49 as amended by the County of Santa Barbara through Chapter 15 of the County Code defines defensible space as:

“the area surrounding a structure or building where basic wildfire protection practices are implemented, providing the key point of defense from an approaching wildfire or escaping structure fire. The area is characterized by the establishment and maintenance of fuel modification measures.”

In 2005, the State Board of Forestry adopted provisions now identified in Public Resource Code 4291 that requires all structures on State Responsibility Area (SRA) lands to maintain 100 feet of defensible space clearance. Within the County of Santa Barbara, 100 feet defensible space is also enforced on unincorporated Local Responsibility Area (LRA) in the Santa Barbara County Fire Protection District. The 100-foot defensible space clearance is a minimum, and in some instances this distance may need to be increased due to the location of a structure on a slope or because of the vegetative fuel loading surrounding a structure.

The program is managed by a Vegetation Management Captain. Initial inspections are completed by engine companies. If the property fails to meet the defensible space requirements in the established time frame the property is abated at the direction of Vegetation Management.

GIS and Mapping

The Vegetation Management section collects and maintains the Department's GIS database. The data is used in pre-fire planning, Department map book creation and updating, incident mapping, and individual mapping projects.

Pre-Fire Planning

The Pre-Fire Engineer works with community groups, individuals, cooperative agencies, and land use regulatory agencies (local, state, and federal) to create and maintain wildfire plans.

Vegetation Management Projects

The Vegetation Management section provides a mechanism for conducting projects of varying scales to reduce hazardous wildland fuels and maintain forest and range health. These projects include the use of prescribed fire and mechanical treatments.