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COMMUNICATIONS PLAN:

*State Responsibility Area  
Wildland-Urban Interface Building Codes  
and Fire Hazard Severity Zone Maps*

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*California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection  
Office of the State Fire Marshal*

<This is a Working Document and will change over time>

*Issue Background*

CAL FIRE is publishing updated fire hazard severity zone maps that will be used in implementing new wildland-urban interface building codes. Separate maps will be used for the Local Responsibility Area (LRA) and the State Responsibility Area (SRA). The CAL FIRE units statewide will host at least one public meeting in each of the 56 counties with SRA during Summer 2007. The LRA maps will be released in 2008 and the affected local agencies will review and adopt the designations.

The Department anticipates public concern for map accuracy, perceived conflicts with prior mapping efforts and locally assigned fire hazard or fire risk designations, and potential use of the maps for unintended purposes. Contention may arise when individuals and local governments disagree with the hazard rating for a given area. This is especially likely to occur when they do not understand the criteria used in developing the maps or when they attempt to use the *hazard* maps for *risk* assessment.

Representatives from stakeholder groups including the California Building Officials Association, the California Building Industry Association, California Fire Chiefs Association, California League of Cities, Regional Council of California Counties, product manufacturers, the insurance industry and the Sierra Club have been involved in development and implementation of the building standards throughout the process.

*Communication Summary*

*This issue affects a large population* - More than 5 million homes are currently located in the wildland-urban interface.

*This issue affects a multi-faceted audience* - In addition to the WUI property owners, our audience includes fire officials, building officials, land use officials, the building, insurance and real estate industries and environmental groups.

*This issue has the potential to be controversial* - Costs for construction will likely increase in designated WUI areas by as much as \$1,800 per home. In addition, there is a potential for the

FHSZ maps to influence land use decisions, insurance rates and property values. Therefore, some communities or individuals may disagree with how areas are zoned.

*This issue will attract media scrutiny* - The combination of fire safety and property values will ensure media interest in the public hearings in each community giving CAL FIRE a better opportunity to educate the public and local agencies about the requirements.

### Communication Goals

- Clarify understanding of the zones and building standards to alleviate concerns and generate acceptance and participation among the public.
- Educate the building and fire community about the building standards.
- Prevent use of the FHSZ maps in unintended ways.
- Encourage acceptance of the new zones in SRA initially.
- Encourage adoption of very high fire hazard severity zones in LRA.

### Communication Strategy

Audiences: Home builders in the wildland-urban interface, homeowners, building officials, fire officials, land use planning officials, architects, environmental organizations, industry organizations.

- *Issue:* The fire hazard severity zone maps evaluate hazard, not risk.  
*Message:* Hazard is based on the physical conditions that give us a likelihood that an area will burn within 30-50 years without considering modifications such as fuel reduction efforts. Risk is the potential damage a fire can do to the area under existing conditions, including any mitigation taken.
- *Issue:* The new maps are significantly different from the previous versions. Properties that weren't in the very high fire hazard severity zone before suddenly are.  
*Message:* The revisions reflect improved fire science, mapping techniques, and data. The recognition that ember intrusion ignites homes up to a mile from the fire has been incorporated as well. The model used to develop the fire hazard severity zone maps considers the probability of the area burning and potential fire behavior in the area based on elements such as fire history, potential fuel over a 50-year period, blowing embers, terrain, weather and the likelihood of structures igniting.
- *Issue:* The FHSZ maps may influence home insurance premiums, property transactions, zoning, and fuel clearance as part of fire planning or grant proposals.  
*Message:* The assumptions used to develop this map were established specifically to create a scientifically-based hazard map ONLY to reduce structure losses in the case of wildland fires by instituting more ignition-resistant building requirements in areas where the fire hazard is greater. (These decision-making efforts would be better served by risk evaluation than by hazard evaluation.) Insurance companies have already developed maps that are more effective for their purposes.

### Assignments and Parameters

Unit PIOs will participate in public hearings, field local media (reporting all contacts to Sacramento), participate in public events, distribute collateral material, and deliver presentations to organizations as needed.

### Opportunities and Tactics

*Existing venues:* Provide public-focused printed material at public hearings presentations to associations

*Partnerships:* Coordinate with associations to get the message out (CALBO, Cal Chiefs, BIA, ICC, businesses, local agencies, etc.).

*Media monitoring:* Watch for and, if necessary, respond to inaccurate media reports to ensure that the message stays clear. Continually refine message.

### Materials/Deliverables

#### *Task: Develop Communication Collateral Materials*

Comprehensive project backgrounder

FHSZ fact sheet

Building codes fact sheet

Building materials fact sheet

Question & answer sheet

Project press release

SRA-specific/LRA-specific press releases

Local press releases as necessary (produced by unit PIOs)

Graphics (photos of compliant building techniques and materials)

Contact: All Participants

Due Date: May 14

#### *Task: Develop Project Website*

Legislation/regulations/timeline/updates

Interface for UC Berkeley Fire Toolbox/Maps

Interface for Building Materials Listing

Dedicated e-mail link for questions

Links to appropriate associations, blogs, and resources

Post all collateral material separately as downloadable PDFs

Post print, audio and video coverage

E-mail updates to those who register for it

Modify building codes training presentation into web-based training

Contact: June Iljana/All Participants

Due Date: May 15

#### *Task: Develop Spokesperson Opportunities*

Talk radio programs

Newspaper editorial boards

Provide talking points/Q&A sheet

Backgrounder and fact sheets (from press kit)

Practice sessions with PIO and program staff

Contact: June Iljana/Unit PIOs                      Due Date: May 15

*Task: Brief Unit PIOs to clarify responsibility and assignments*

Local media outreach and query response with unified message points

Major media and aggressive/contentious media referred to Sacramento

Participate in public events (home shows), develop a list of opportunities

Attend public hearings to handle local media and public - report issues

Sacramento will provide collateral materials listed above

Contact: June Iljana    Due Date: April 15

*Task: Write and place articles in industry/association publications and websites*

Contact: Karen Terrill