



Zone 0- Current Status

Wendy Goldsby/Elizabeth Stage
Oakland Firesafe Council

Piedmont Pines
Neighborhood Association-
Community Meeting
01 June 2026

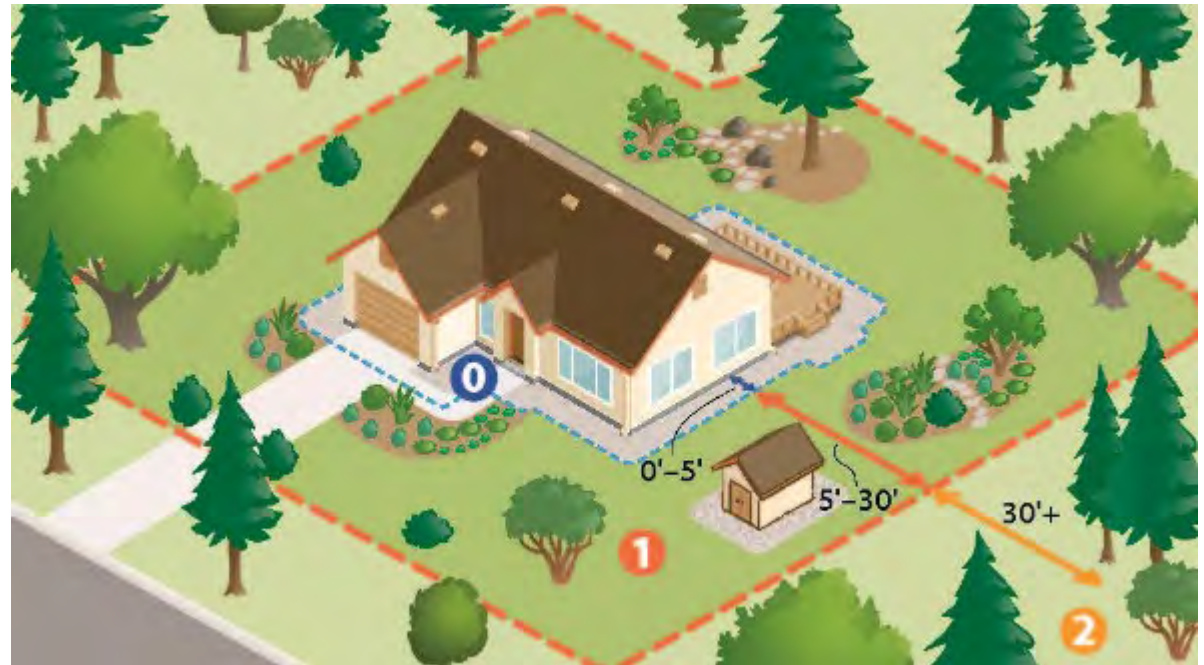
What is Zone 0?

Ember-resistant zone

0-5 ft zone

Non-combustible zone

Immediate zone



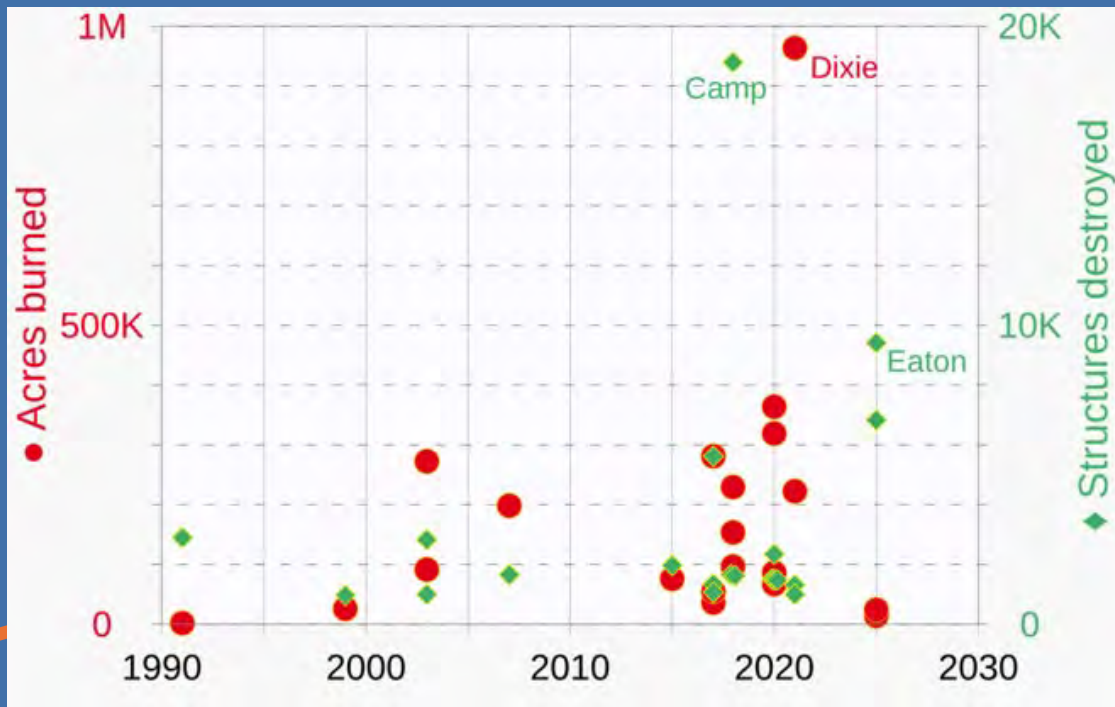
- Zone 0 is the 0-5 ft perimeter around the structure including attached decks.
- It is an important component of **DEFENSIBLE SPACE**

OR The **buffer between the structure and the surrounding combustible vegetation that can slow or halt an approaching fire**

How We Got Here

Wildfires in CA are increasing in frequency and severity

About 75% of California's 20 most destructive wildfires have occurred since 2015



Statistics | CAL FIRE
[List of California wildfires - Wikipedia](#)

California State has been active in drafting legislation to deal with this threat.

- Current regulations relating to defensible space already exist for Zone 1 and 2 (early 2000).
- Three new laws were created to reinforce the Zone 0 standard across California.
 - Assembly Bill 3074 (2020), Senate Bill 504 (2024), Assembly Bill 1455 (2025)
- **These laws** directed the California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection to develop new defensible space regulations to include Zone 0 for California State.
- Governor Newsom's Executive Order N-18-25 following the LA fires, stipulated completion of rulemaking process by **December 31, 2025**

Why So Many Wildfires?

Climate change and weather

- Abundant, dry vegetation
- Increasing temperature
- **Low humidity**
- **Strong winds (east/Diablo)**



**Red Flag
Warning!**

People

Increasing population density at the Wildland Urban Interface – WUI

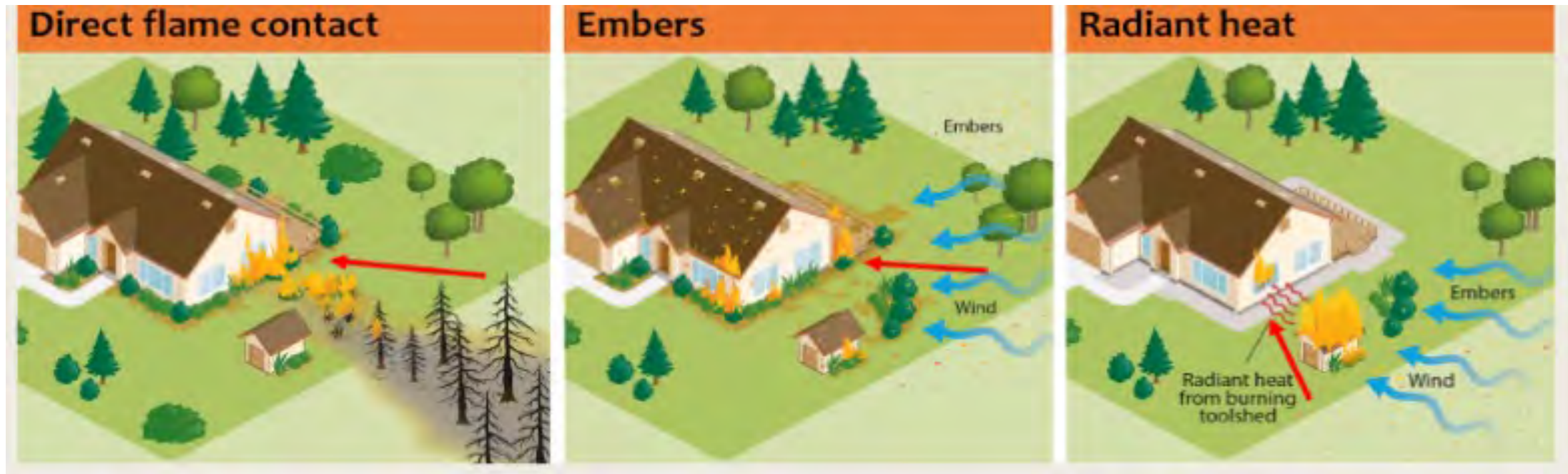
- Sparks from yard equipment, lawnmowers, vehicles, fireworks, powerlines, and arson



Wildfire!



Ways a Wildfire Can Impact Your Home



Flames from wildfire find a pathway to ignite a structure.

Embers from wildfire travel by wind and ignite combustible materials around and on a structure.

Intense heat from nearby fire ignites a structure.

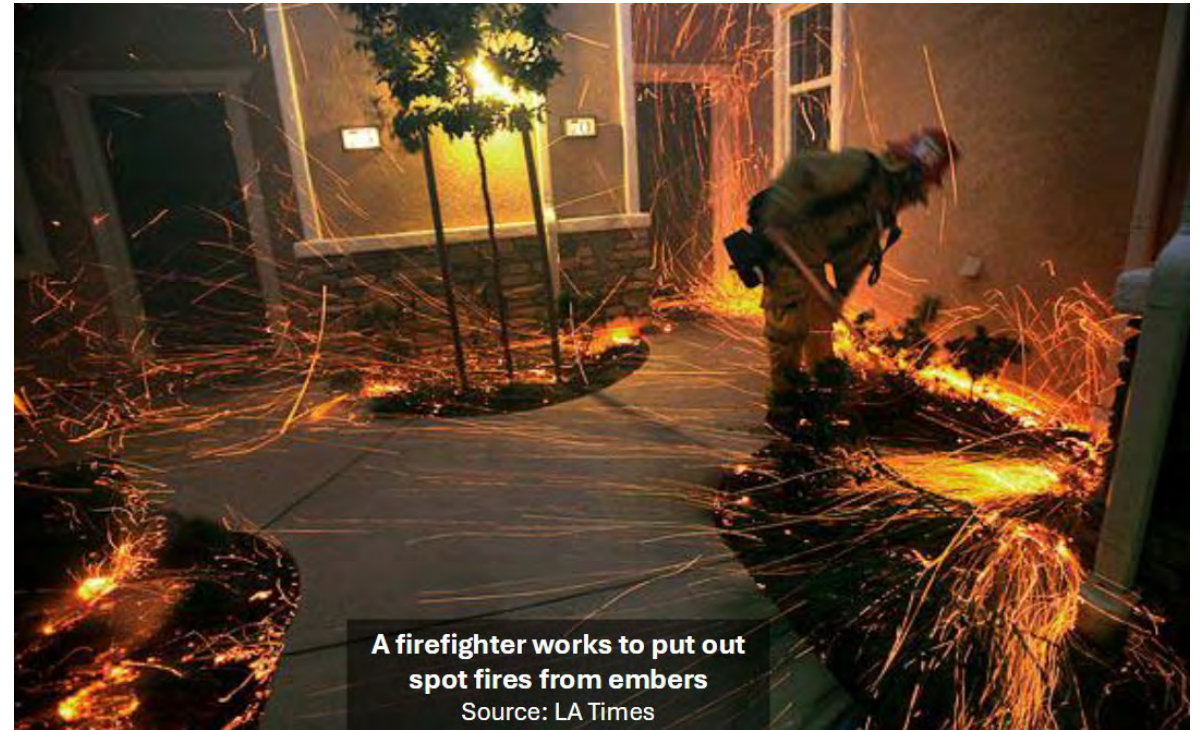
60-90% of structure loss from wildfire is due to embers

Zone 0 Protects Homes Against Wildfire

Maintaining Zone 0 has been identified as the most important way to reduce the risk of a structure igniting during an ember-driven wildfire.

How? It removes fuel from vulnerable areas on the structure

- Prevents embers that accumulate at the base of the structure from starting fires in and around your home
- Removes potential “pathways” for flames from neighboring structures or flammable materials to your home
- Lowers the temperature around your home to prevent ignition from radiant heat



A firefighter works to put out spot fires from embers
Source: LA Times



IBHS

Bulk of evidence shows keeping fuel away from your home significantly lowers risk of home ignition

Firefighter observations, captured video



Laboratory experiments



Ember image: UL Research Institutes' Fire Safety Research Institute

Post-fire observational studies



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[Why Ember Storms Are A Major Wildfire Threat: IBHS Wildfire Testing](#)

An Example Study



Insurance
Institute for
Building and
Home Safety
IBHS.org

Draft Rule for Zone 0 – mid 2025



- Clear the area of combustible materials:
 - Combustible landscaping materials including grass, shrubs, plants, weeds, fallen leaves, and flammable mulches like bark or woodchips.
 - The only exception for plants is for small, individual potted plants in non-combustible containers. They must be under 18 inches tall and cannot be placed near windows or vents.
 - Firewood, combustible trellises, and similar items are not permitted within the 5-foot zone and under decks and stairs.
- Modify Combustible Fences and Gates:
 - Any combustible fence attached to home must have a 5-foot non-combustible section at the point of attachment. Combustible gates cannot be directly attached to the house.
- Maintain Trees:
 - Existing trees must be carefully maintained. Branches must be kept at least 5 feet away from the sides of the house, 5 feet above the roof, and 10 feet away from chimneys.
- Compliance mandated for new construction immediately after adoption. Existing homes to comply within 3 years of adoption.

Where We Are Now



- Missed statutory deadline:
 - December 2025
- Significant pushback from the public during the draft review process especially from SoCal
- Work paused until Spring 2026
- Cost impacts and public reaction assessed by Board of Forestry
- New revised draft rule issued 4/17/26
- Public meeting held 4/23/26
- Short public comment period until mid-June
- Subcommittee is targeting finalizing the regulations by July 7, 2026

Current Revised Draft Zone 0 Rule – April 2026



Summary of Draft Zone 0 Regulation

- Consideration given to diverse environments, structure type, and costs
- Established two areas within Zone 0
 - Non-combustible, vegetation-free safety zone-
 - From the structure's wall to the edge of the eave (or "drip line")
 - Where the eaves are < 1ft,
 - minimum of one foot from the wall,
 - two feet from windows, doors, and vents and
 - five feet from attached decks, stairs or pergola
 - Low combustibility zone from the drip line of the eave through the remainder of the 5ft within Zone 0.
- More time allowed for existing homes to comply:
 - Phase 1: 3 years for less complicated and less costly improvements
 - Phase 2: 5 years for more complicated/costly improvements

General Requirements for Zone 0

Phase 1:

- Remove combustible mulches, dead plant material, fallen leaves and needles, woodchips, firewood, stored wood, etc. Ensure roof and gutters are free of fallen leaves or needles.
- Remove combustible materials from under decks, pergolas and stairs.
- Trees trimmed back 10 ft from chimney, 5 ft from roof and away from eaves. Free from dead or dying branches. Lower branches removed as needed to prevent laddering.
- Establish low combustibility zone- Some plants allowed with spacing and height requirements.

Phase 2:

- Establish safety zone with NO combustible materials including vegetation.
- Structures within Zone 0 must include non-combustible walls and roofs.
- Fences and gates:
 - A five-foot non-combustible section is required where fences or gates attach to a home or come within 1 ft of the home.
 - No new combustible fences allowed within 5 ft of the home; existing combustible fences may be repaired

HOME



Acceptable Vegetation



- Non-woody herbaceous smaller plants, such as bulbs, impatiens, begonias, petunias, poppies, yarrow and non-thatching succulents are allowed in spaced groupings

Zone 0 – Ember Resistant Zone - Fire Safe Marin

- Potted plants in non-combustible pots (5-gallon max) that are easily moveable and spaced appropriately

Spacing Requirements

- Plants to be no taller than 18” and no greater than 1 sq ft area and separated by 1.5 x the height of the tallest plant

- Low ground covers. Examples include blue-star creeper, beach strawberry, creeping thyme, and mosses.
- Grass or lawn is allowed but must be maintained and mowed per requirements (3” max height).
- Well maintained trees trimmed according to regulation
- Nothing under the eaves, decks, pergolas or next to windows, vents or doors

Note that plants change with time!

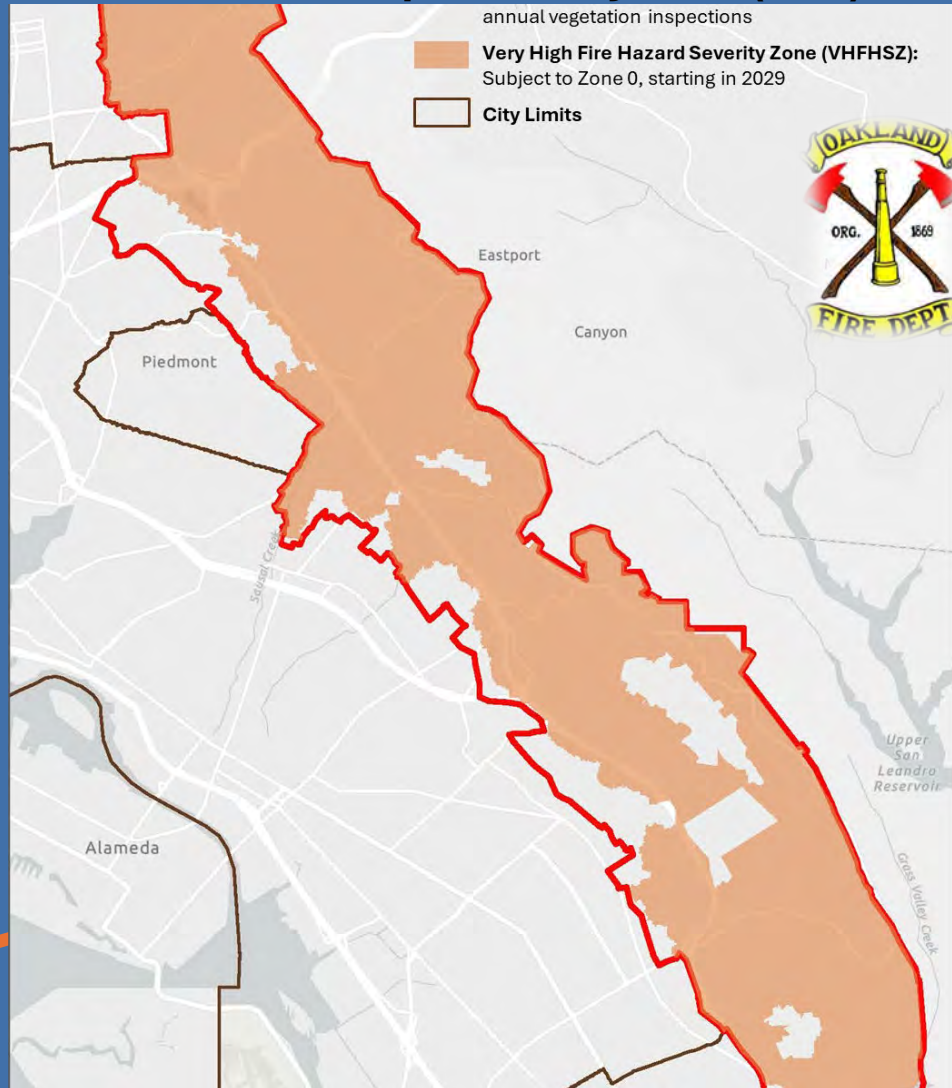
Continual maintenance is critical



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Oakland Zone 0

Current Local Responsibility Area (LRA)



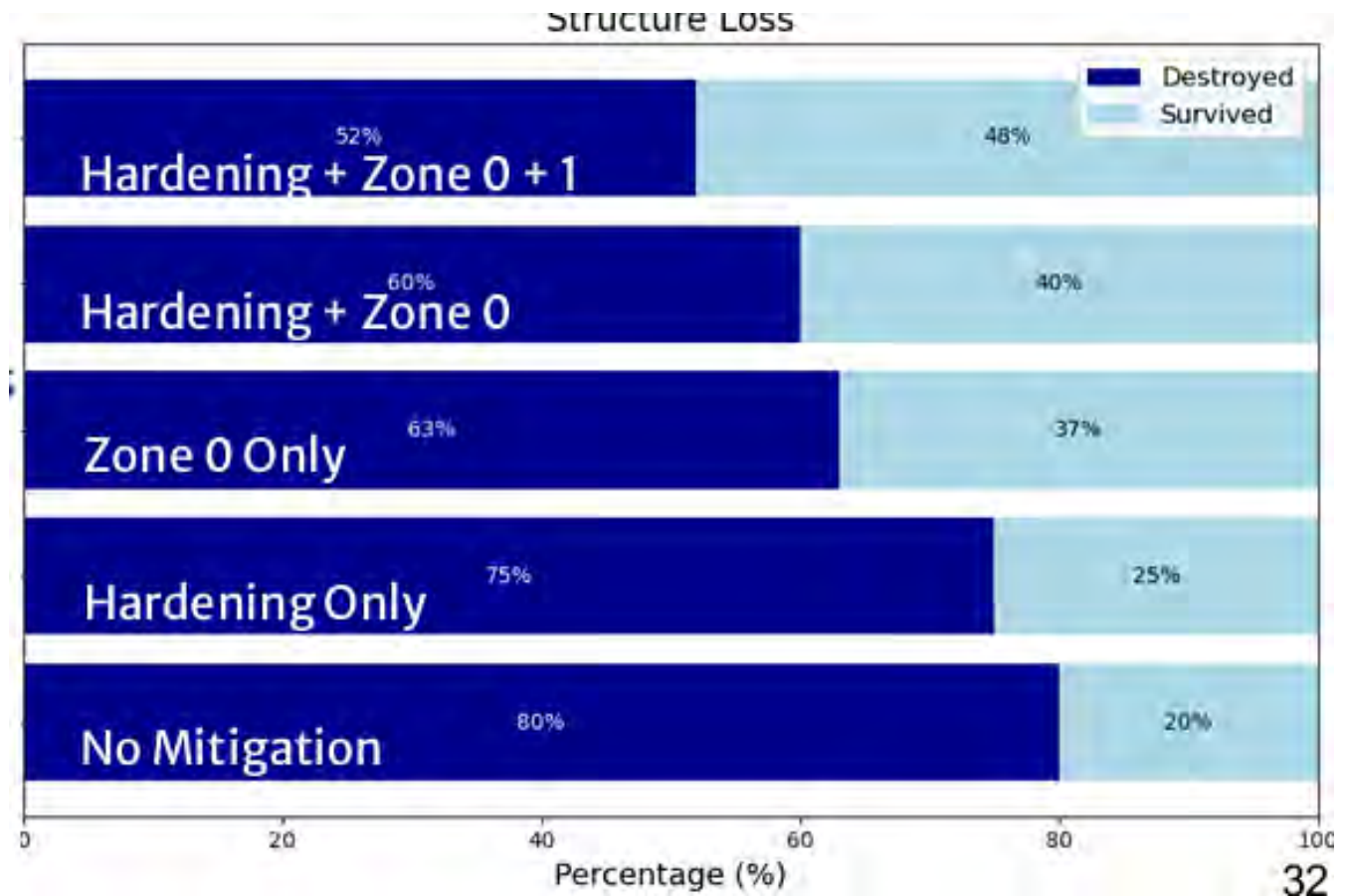
- Zone 0 regulations are required in State Responsibility Areas (SRA) and very high fire severity zones in the Local Responsibility Areas (LRA)
- The current April draft rule allows local governments to implement alternative practices that are substantially similar or stricter than the final State regulation
- Oakland is maintaining its current very high severity zone or WUI map
- Oakland implementation of Zone 0 in 2029 following a phased approach over the next three years
- Communication plan being developed through the East Bay Wildfire Coalition of Governments
- Oakland defensible space inspections are starting in June- check your mail for the notice!

[Wildfire District Inspections | City of Oakland, CA](#)

Will Zone 0 Ensure my Home Survives a Wildfire?

It is difficult to predict outcomes from a Wildfire

- There is no single action that ensures a homes survivability.
- There are no guarantees.
- However, evidence strongly suggests that structure loss may be significantly reduced if the fuel next to the home is removed and a combination of mitigation measures are made.



[Isolating the Primary Drivers of Fire Risk to Structures in WUI regions in California | Research Square](#) Michael Gollner et al.
[Fire risk to structures in California's Wildland-Urban Interface | Nature Communications](#) ZamaniAlaei et al.

Take aways

- ✓ Zone 0 is coming soon!
- ✓ Creating defensible space with Zone 0 and home hardening are critical for home and personal safety
 - Start from the home and work outward. Anything you do, you are better off than before!
- ✓ Get to know and work with your neighbors on building a wildfire resilient community
 - The more resilient we are as a community the better the chances are for our collective survival-
 - Think Firewise
- ✓ Review our Guides and wildfire safety programs plus online sources like CAL FIRE, IBHS, Firesafe Marin, etc.
- ✓ Reach out to us with any questions



Before-and-after representation of a single-family house that implemented Zone 0. From Board of Forestry and Fire Protection Draft Zone 0 Regulations / April 2026

Oakland Firesafe Council Preparedness

info@oaklandfiresafecouncil.org

510.575.0916

oaklandfiresafecouncil.org

genoak.org



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