



VENTURA COUNTY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT
FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU
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806– FUEL MOSAIC IN DEFENSIBLE SPACE ZONES

APPROVED BY:



FIRE MARSHAL

Subject:

2016 Ventura County Fire Code, Appendix W 1051.1 Trees & W105.1.2 Fuel Mosaic. Installation, maintenance and spacing of plants, trees and other vegetation within required defensible space and fuel modification zones within Ventura County.

Code Requirements:

Ventura County Fire Code (VCFC) and State Codes, Public Resource Code (PRC) 4291 & Government Code (GC) 51182, require a minimum 100-foot defensible space zone around buildings.

The codes specify that the amount of vegetation clearance needs to be such that it will not form a means of rapidly transmit fire from other nearby vegetation to a structure or from a structure to nearby vegetation. It does not specify any spacing requirements of plants and vegetation within the defensible space zone. Ventura County Fire Department is required to enforce at a minimum the Calfire requirement within defensible space zones.

Discussion:

To provide written spacing specifications for design, installation and maintenance of plant, trees and vegetation, a tree and Fuel Mosaic spacing requirement was first introduced under VCFPD Ordinance 27 January 1, 2011 and carried forward under Ordinance 28 and now Ordinance 30.

Review of defensible space zones that did not have any spacing between plants, trees and vegetation that would fall within the current fuel mosaic requirements indicated too much dead understory and material within the landscaped and mosaic area. There was concern regarding the amount of heat and ember production this would create. Additional review was conducted of the recent fires within Ventura County and Los Angeles County over the past two years. Areas that did not have any spacing and or where too large of a fuel mosaic existed, had the fire burn completely through the defensible space zone exposing homes to greater heat, flames and embers.

Additionally, over the past years, other fire agencies, including Calfire, have issued plant and tree spacing requirements for defensible space zones.

To address the concerns regarding excessive fuel loading within defensible space zones, including current fuel mosaic requirements, and to protect life and property, a new VCFD Standard 515 *Defensible Space and Fuel Modification Zones* has been issued to specify spacing requirements for plants, trees and vegetation within a defensible space zone. This Administrative Ruling addresses the applicability of new VCFD Standard 515 as a replacement for VCFC Sections W105.1.1 and W105.1.2.

Requirements:

Effective April 19, 2019, VCFC Sections w105.1.1 Trees and W105.1.2 Fuel Mosaic are repealed and VCFD Standard 515 shall be enforced in their place. This will be reflected in the next VCFPD Ordinance adopting an updated VCFC.