



November 4, 2020

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY FOR FIRE SAFETY EVALUATION OF EXISTING ROADS

Sonoma County Code Chapter 13, Article V “Fire Safe Standards” sets forth the requirements to comply with Public Resources Code section 4290 and California Code of Regulations, Title 14 Natural Resources Code, Division 1-5, Chapter 7, Subchapter 2, Article 1-5, SRA Fire Safe Regulations. This Administrative Policy establishes the County’s evaluation process of existing roads to meet the Fire Safe Standards, and is incorporated by reference into Sonoma County Code, Chapter 13, Article V, Sec. 13-25(f).

The County’s Fire Safe Standards Ordinance and this Administrative Policy meet or exceed the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection’s (Board of Forestry’s) Fire Safe Standards or have the same practical effect. This Administrative Policy sets forth the County’s local amendments to both the Board of Forestry’s Fire Safe Standards and the California Fire Code. After a noticed public hearing, the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors adopted the California Fire Code, Appendix D, Fire Apparatus Access Roads with local amendments on December 2, 2019. Likewise, after a noticed public hearing, the Board of Supervisors adopted the Sonoma County’s local amendments to the Board of Forestry’s Fire Safe Standards on August 4, 2020.

MINIMUM ROAD STANDARDS

A Fire Inspector shall perform a fire access road evaluation for all development approvals subject to Sonoma County Code Chapter 13, Article V. The evaluation shall confirm that the proposed development meets or exceeds the below requirements, and the proposed development shall be reasonably accessed and served in the case of a wildfire, with adequate ingress, egress and the capacity for concurrent evacuation and emergency response. These are the minimum County road standards.

1. **Existing Private Roads.** Any existing private roads shall provide at least a twelve foot road and at least an additional one foot of vegetation clearance on each side of the road.
2. **Fire Protection Plan for all residential and commercial developments in the Very High Fire Severity Zones.** Sonoma County Code §13-17(b)(92).
 - A fire protection plan shall be required for any new residential or commercial building within a Very High Fire Severity Zone.
 - The plan shall be prepared by a qualified professional retained by the permit

applicant. The plan shall include, at a minimum, defensible space zones, identification of vegetation types, replacement of non-native flammable vegetation with approved fire resistive vegetation, and a maintenance program for all vegetation.

- The fire protection plan shall be based upon a site-specific wildfire risk assessment that includes considerations of location, topography, aspect, flammable vegetation, climatic conditions and fire history.
- The plan shall address: (1) access, (2) water supply, (3) building ignition and fire-resistance factors, (4) fire protection systems and equipment, (5) defensible space and vegetation management.

3. **Discretionary approvals.** For discretionary approvals, additional turnouts and turnarounds or other mitigation measures may be required on existing roads to ensure concurrent fire engine access and civilian evacuation. Sonoma County Code §13-63. Requirements for existing public roads serving discretionary development project approvals are in the Sonoma County TPW and PRMD Guidelines for Traffic Impact Studies.

[https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/TPW/Roads/Services/Data-and-Resources/Traffic-Study-Guidelines.](https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/TPW/Roads/Services/Data-and-Resources/Traffic-Study-Guidelines)

Minimum road construction standards for development project approvals include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a. **Minor subdivisions** conditions of approval shall comply with at least the minimum road standards set forth in Sonoma County Code section 13-34(a) and Chapter 25.
- b. **Subdivisions** conditions of approval shall comply with at least the minimum road standards set forth in Sonoma County Code Chapter 13, Article V Fire Safe Standards and Chapter 25.
- c. **One-or Two Family Residential Developments Exceeding 30 Units.** Sonoma County Code §13-17(b)(139) Developments of one- or two-family dwellings where the number of dwelling units exceeds 30 shall be provided with two separate and approved fire apparatus access roads.
- d. **Multiple-family dwelling residential projects having more than 50 dwelling units** shall be equipped throughout with two separate and approved fire apparatus roads pursuant to Sonoma County Code Chapter 13-17(b)(136).
- e. **Commercial and Industrial Developments.** Commercial and industrial building permit approvals shall comply with the California Fire Code, Appendix D, Fire Apparatus Roads, with local amendments adopted by Sonoma County Code §13-17(b)(125)-(140):
 - i. Buildings exceeding three stories or 30 feet in height. Buildings or facilities exceeding 30 feet or three stories in height shall have not fewer than two means of fire apparatus access for each structure.

- ii. Buildings exceeding 62,000 square feet in area. Buildings of facilities having a gross building area of more than 62,000 square feet shall be provided with two separate and approved fire apparatus access roads. Projects having a gross building area of up to 124,000 square feet that have a single approved fire apparatus access road where all buildings are equipped throughout with approved automatic sprinklers.
- iii. Remoteness. Where two fire apparatus access roads are required, they shall be placed a distance apart equal to not less than one half of the length of the maximum overall diagonal dimension of the property or area to be served, measured in a straight line between accesses unless otherwise approved by the fire code official.

iv. **Aerial Fire Apparatus Access Roads**

Where required. Where the vertical distance between the grade plane and the highest roof surface exceeds 30 feet, approved aerial fire apparatus access roads shall be provided. For purposes of this section, the highest roof surface shall be determined by measurement to the eave of a pitched roof, the intersection of the roof to the exterior wall, or the top of parapet walls, whichever is greater.

Width. Aerial fire apparatus access roads shall have a minimum unobstructed width of 26 feet, exclusive of shoulders, in the immediate vicinity of the building or portion thereof.

Proximity to building. One or more of the required access routes meeting this condition shall be located not less than 15 feet and not greater than 30 feet from the building, and shall be positioned paralleled to one entire side of the building. The side of the building on which the aerial fire apparatus is positioned shall be approved by the fire code official.

Obstructions. Overhead utility and power lines shall not be located over the aerial fire apparatus access road or between the aerial fire apparatus road and the building. Other obstructions shall be permitted to be placed with the approval of the fire code official.

Sonoma County Code §13-17(b) (125)-(140)

- 4. All of the other provisions of Sonoma County Code Chapter 13, Article V Fire Safe Standards shall apply to any road if it is extended, reconstructed or improved pursuant to a development approval, but only as to the portion of the road that is extended, reconstructed or improved.

5. All roads shall comply with Sonoma County Code Chapter 13, Article V, Division C, Signing and Building Numbering.
6. All roads shall have vertical clearances that conform to the requirements in California Vehicle Code. This requires a vertical clearance of at least 13' 6" to ensure fire engine access.
7. Except as otherwise provided in the Fire Safe Standards, all applications for development approvals shall be accompanied by plans, engineering calculations and other data necessary to determine compliance with the provisions of the Fire Safe Standards.

In addition, County staff also apply other applicable federal, state and local laws which may impose additional upgrades to existing roads or secondary access routes to serve development approval.¹

If the California Department of Board of Forestry and Fire Protection certifies the County of Sonoma's Fire Safe Standards Ordinance and this Administrative Policy on November 4, 2020, any amendments to the County's Fire Safe Standards Ordinance or this Administrative Policy would require re-certification.

2550 Ventura Avenue Santa Rosa CA 95403-2859 (707) 565-1900
www.PermitSonoma.org



¹ If there is any conflict between the ordinances and the Administrative Policy, the ordinances shall prevail.