



COUNTY OF LAKE

Board of Supervisors

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MOKE SIMON
District 1 Supervisor

PRESS RELEASE **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Preparing our Families and Homes for Wildfire Season

County Insights from Moke Simon, Chair of the Board of Supervisors

LAKE COUNTY, CA (April 16, 2020) – With wildfire season swiftly arriving, an Urgency Ordinance was adopted Tuesday, shortening the noticing period provided under the County’s Hazardous Vegetation/Combustible Material Abatement Ordinance (Chapter 13, Article VIII of the Lake County Code) from 30 to 15 days for the period of April 15 through July 15, 2020. This local Ordinance supplements, and does not in any way reduce the demands of California Public Resources Code section 4291.

CAL FIRE indicates the length of fire season in California has generally “increased by 75 days,” and, “Climate change is considered a key driver of this trend.” In a letter to the Board submitted earlier this month, Jessica Pyska of Cobb Area Council likewise noted, “The current COVID-19 emergency has taken the focus off the coming fire season, which given the dry, mild winter, presents possible catastrophic wildfire conditions.”

When asked about this topic, Chairman Simon, who also chairs the Lake County Community Risk Reduction Authority (RRA), strongly concurred:

“With most residents at home, it is critical we take this opportunity to prepare for wildfire season. I have been a strong advocate, along with Supervisor Sabatier, that the County set the example by taking care of our own properties. Many local Fire Districts, including ours in Lake County, provide Emergency Medical Services, and that means mutual aid may be tougher to come by this year. In recent years, we have seen how initially moderate events can turn into historically damaging ones when firefighting resources are scarce, or spread among multiple ongoing fires. We’re adding COVID-19 response to that equation this year, so this is serious. We all have to clean up our properties.”

Under the local Ordinance, “All hazardous vegetation and/or combustible materials within the unincorporated area of the County of Lake [are] deemed a Public Nuisance.” Owners, occupants, and individuals “in control” of any property in Lake County are responsible to clear any and all materials that constitute a dangerous fire hazard, including but not limited to the following, for parcels with structures or other improvements:

- Maintenance of a thirty-foot (30-foot) defensible space around all buildings/structures.
- Maintenance of ten-foot (10-foot) clearance next to a frontage road.
- Removal of all portions of trees within ten (10) feet of a chimney or stovepipe outlet.
- Maintenance of a roof on any structure free from leaves, needles, or dead or dying wood.

- Removal of all dead vegetation and/or combustible material from the subject property to the extent determined by the County Fire Official (i.e., the Chief Building Official or designee) to be necessary to avoid an imminent risk of harm to public health, safety, and/or welfare.
- Maintenance of shrubbery and trees year round.

Specific parcels are assessed in accordance with State and National standards, based on factors like property slope, fuel load and/or fuel type, and requirements may be increased, when necessary to mitigate fire risk (including maintenance of up to 100 feet of defensible space from neighboring structures).

Resources to prepare your home are available at:

<https://www.readyforwildfire.org/prepare-for-wildfire/get-ready/defensible-space/>

“With many at home with their families, this is also a great time to work on your family’s Evacuation Plan,” urged Simon. “Visit <https://www.ready.gov/evacuation/>, for tools to help develop your strategy, and recommendations to put together a portable emergency kit.”

Additionally, on Tuesday, the Board authorized three contracts for general Code Enforcement activities, culminating a recent RFQ process that yielded a strong response.

Interim Community Development Director, Scott De Leon, noted the Board had allocated \$500,000 for abatement of properties, and thanked previous staff, Code Enforcement Division leader, Andrew Williams, and Assistant County Administrative Officer, Susan Parker, for significant contributions, stating, “I inherited this, it was a two-year effort.”

At the request of District 2 Supervisor, Bruno Sabatier, De Leon clarified these contracts will serve general Code Enforcement efforts, and are distinct from recently-discussed and ongoing wildfire mitigation efforts in the Zones of Benefit established in 2019 in the communities of Buckingham, Riviera Heights, Riviera West and Clearlake Riviera. No money raised through Benefit Zone assessments will be used to support general Code Enforcement efforts funded by these contracts.

Chairman Simon applauded staff’s efforts:

“Cleaning up our neighborhoods through Code Enforcement is a Vision 2028 priority, and we continue to make progress. Abatements make our communities safer, and the Board was unanimous in supporting this important work.”

Lake County’s Hazardous Vegetation/Combustible Material Abatement Ordinance (please remember, as a result of Tuesday’s action noticing periods will be 15 days, and not 30 days, as indicated) is posted at:

https://library.municode.com/ca/lake_county/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=COOR_CH13NU_ARTVIIIHAVECOMAAB

Live video of all Board of Supervisors meetings is accessible through the County website and Lake County PEG TV (TV8). Agendas, including instructions for participating in Board meetings via Zoom, and live and archived video are available at:

<https://countyoflake.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx>

To comment on any Board of Supervisors Agenda Item, write to the Clerk to the Board of Supervisors by 4pm the day before the meeting, PublicComment@lakecountyca.gov.

The Community Development Department's Building Division can be reached at 707-263-2382. Code Enforcement can be reached at 707-263-2309, and complaints can be filed online,
at: http://www.lakecountyca.gov/Government/Directory/Community_Development.htm