



CITY OF

NEWPORT BEACH

City Council Staff Report

August 26, 2025
Agenda Item No. 4

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Jeff Boyles, Fire Chief - 949-644-3101, jboyles@nbfd.net

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TITLE: Ordinance No. 2025-11: Amending Section 9.04.470 (Local Agency Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone) To Adopt the 2025 Moderate, High and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones, As Designated by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection and Pursuant to California Government Code Section 51178

ABSTRACT:

For the City Council's consideration is the adoption of an ordinance to amend section 9.05.470 of the Newport Beach Municipal Code to adopt the 2025 Moderate, High and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones as designated by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE). This 2025 map update includes expanded Local Responsibility Area designations across 4.6 million Southern California acres. Assembly Bill 211 (2022) mandates the local adoption of the State Fire Marshal's Moderate and High designations within 120 days. The City of Newport Beach must adopt these zones by ordinance by July 22, 2025. Ordinance No. 2025-11 was introduced and considered at the City Council's regular meeting on July 8, 2025.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- a) Determine this action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15060(c)(2) and 15060(c)(3) of the CEQA Guidelines because this action will not result in a physical change to the environment, directly or indirectly; and
- b) Conduct second reading and adopt Ordinance No. 2025-11, *An Ordinance of the City Council of the City of Newport Beach, California, Amending Section 9.04.470 (Local Agency Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone) To Adopt the 2025 Moderate, High, and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones, As Designated By The California Department of Forestry And Fire Protection And Pursuant to California Government Code Section 51178.*

DISCUSSION:

At its July 8, 2025 meeting, the City Council introduced and passed to second reading Ordinance No. 2025-11. The ordinance adopts the 2025 Fire Hazard Severity Zone map update as issued by CAL FIRE. The map, released on March 24, 2025, significantly expands upon the previous 2011 version, which only identified "Very High" zones.

The new maps classify approximately 4.6 million acres in Southern California into Moderate, High and Very High zones.

For the City of Newport Beach, the 2011 maps included 2,825 parcels in the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (VHFHSZ). Under the 2025 update, 831 parcels are now in the Moderate zone, 1,160 in the High zone, and 4,247 in the Very High zone. Properties located within the High Fire Hazard Severity Zone and the VHFHSZ are subject to wildfire-resistant construction standards under California Building Code Chapter 7A. These include requirements such as ember-resistant venting, ignition-resistant materials, and multi-pane windows for new construction and major renovations. Additionally, Assembly Bill 38 (2019) mandates that property sellers in VHFHSZs complete a defensible space inspection and provide documentation of compliance with home-hardening standards before closing escrow.

Homeowners in the VHFHSZ must also meet defensible space requirements established by Government Code Section 51182 and may soon be subject to additional standards under Assembly Bill 3074 (2020). AB 3074 introduces an “Ember-Resistant Zone” (Zone 0), defined as the area within five feet of any structure, which must be cleared of combustible materials including decorative items, landscape vegetation, and potted plants. The Board of Forestry is expected to finalize Zone 0 regulations by December 31, 2025, pursuant to Governor Newsom’s Executive Order N-18-25.

The 2025 Fire Hazard Severity Zone Maps must be adopted within 120 days of their release on March 24, 2025. Adoption of Ordinance No. 2025-11 ensures compliance with State law, preserves eligibility for related State funding, supports efficient building permit processing, and enables clear communication with property owners regarding fire safety requirements.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact related to this item.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

Staff recommends the City Council find this action is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15060(c)(2) (the activity will not result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment) and 15060(c)(3) (the activity is not a project as defined in Section 15378) of the CEQA Guidelines, California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3, because it has no potential for resulting in physical change to the environment, directly or indirectly.

NOTICING:

The agenda item has been noticed according to the Brown Act (72 hours in advance of the meeting at which the City Council considers the item).

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A – Local Responsibility Area Fire Hazard Severity Zone Map
Attachment B – Ordinance No. 2025-11