



# STAFF REPORT

DATE: 05/21/2025

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: Fire Department

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**2025-202**

## REQUEST FOR CITY COUNCIL ACTION

### SUBJECT:

ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 15.16 OF THE CORONA MUNICIPAL CODE TO DESIGNATE MODERATE, HIGH, AND VERY HIGH FIRE HAZARD SEVERITY ZONES CONSISTENT WITH STATE LAW

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This staff report recommends the City Council approve an ordinance adopting the updated Fire Hazard Severity Zone (FHSZ) map. The Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) has updated the FHSZ map based on the latest scientific modeling of wildfire risks. Government Code § 51178 and § 51179, as amended by Senate Bill 63 (SB 63) and Assembly Bill 211 (AB211), now requires the adoption of all three FHSZ classes, Moderate, High, and Very High, whereas previously, local agencies were only required to adopt an ordinance for Very High zones. In compliance with SB 63 and AB 211, the City of Corona must formally designate these zones by ordinance. The amendment to CMC Chapter 15.16 is to keep the City in compliance with state law.

### RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the City Council introduce, by title only, and waive full reading of consideration of Ordinance No. 3418, the first reading of an ordinance adopting the City of Corona Local Responsibility Area Fire Hazard Severity Zones Map to designate moderate, high, and very high fire hazard severity zones and amending Chapter 15.16 of the Corona Municipal Code to update the fire hazard severity zones regulations.

## **BACKGROUND & HISTORY:**

The Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) is responsible for identifying Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZ) throughout California. These zones are categorized as Moderate, High, or Very High based on consistent statewide criteria and the expected fire hazard levels in those areas, as required by Government Code 51178. These designations are based on long-term fire behavior projections over a 50-year period, without considering short-term modifications.

### Development of Fire Hazard Severity Zones

The establishment of FHSZs dates back to 1980 following the Panorama Fire. In response, Public Resource Code 4201 was enacted, which mandated that CAL FIRE develop FHSZ maps, with the first version released in 1985. The Tunnel Fire in Oakland Hills in 1991 led to further legislation known as the "Bates Bill" (AB 337), requiring CAL FIRE to identify Very High FHSZs within Local Responsibility Areas (LRA). In 2007, CAL FIRE finalized the Statewide FHSZ model, incorporating Very High FHSZ designations for LRAs, which the City of Corona adopted by ordinance in 2010.

Following the devastating Camp Fire in 2018, which burned over 153,000 acres, destroyed nearly 19,000 structures, and claimed 85 lives, additional legislation was introduced. SB 63, adopted in 2021, required the OSFM to identify Moderate and High FHSZ in LRAs. AB 211, passed in 2022, requires local agencies, such as the City of Corona, to formally designate Very High, High, and Moderate FHSZs by ordinance.

### Local Implementation

Chapter 15.16 of the Corona Municipal Code governs the City's regulations for FHSZs. This chapter was first adopted by Ordinance No. 3034 in 2010, following the requirements set forth in AB 337.

On March 24, 2025, the OSFM released an updated FHSZ map in accordance with Government Code 51178. This map divides the LRA into three categories: Moderate, High, and Very High. The updated map incorporates new scientific data, including ember spread patterns and localized climate information. The model evaluates the probability of fire occurrence and expected fire behavior under extreme fuel and weather conditions. Government Code Section 51179 requires the City to designate, by ordinance, the moderate, high, and very high fire hazard severity zones within 120 days of receiving the updated FHSZ map from the OSFM.

Under Government Code Section 51179(b)(3), the City is prohibited from reducing the hazard severity designations set by the OSFM. However, local agencies may increase hazard levels or add areas not identified by the OSFM as Moderate, High, or Very High FHSZ. The Corona Fire Department has not proposed any changes or additions to the OSFM recommendations as part of this adoption process.

## Key Legislative Requirements

### Senate Bill 63 (SB 63)

- Effective January 1, 2022, SB 63 requires local agencies to adopt all three hazard levels (Moderate, High, and Very High) for LRAs, expanding beyond the previous requirement to adopt only Very High zones.

### Assembly Bill 211 (AB 211)

- Effective September 27, 2022, AB 211 outlines the following requirements for local agencies:
  - Designate Moderate, High, and Very High FHSZ within 120 days of receiving OSFM recommendations.
  - Optionally increase the hazard level in areas where substantial evidence shows additional protection is needed.
  - Transmit a copy of the adopted ordinance to the State Board of Forestry and Fire Protection within 30 days.
  - Post a notice at the county recorder, assessor, and planning agency offices indicating the location of the OSFM-provided or locally amended map.

AB 211 also confirms that any local amendments to OSFM recommendations are final and cannot be overturned by the OSFM. Additionally, the OSFM is required to prepare and adopt a model ordinance to guide local agencies in establishing Very High FHSZs. Ordinances that align with this model are presumed to be in compliance with state requirements.

### **ANALYSIS:**

The attached ordinance adopts the updated FHSZ map issued by the OSFM, designating moderate, high, and very high fire hazard severity zones within the City. The attached ordinance also makes the following changes to CMC Chapter 15.16.

- Section 15.16.010: Adopts the updated FHSZ map issued by the OSFM dated March 24, 2025.
- Section 15.16.020: Clarifies the authority of the Fire Chief to designate areas not identified on the FHSZ map issued by the OSFM to be consistent with the limited authority provided in SB 63 and AB 211, which only authorizes local agencies to increase the hazard levels or add areas not identified by the OSFM on the FHSZ map.
- Section 15.16.030: Updates statutory references for implementation of the FHSZ map by the Building Official.
- Section 15.16.060: Expands the defensible space provisions to high FHSZ.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

The adoption of this Ordinance will not have a financial impact.

**ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:**

This action is exempt pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) of the Guidelines for the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), which states that a project is exempt from CEQA if the activity is covered by the commonsense exemption that CEQA applies only to projects that have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA. This action simply designates the fire hazard severity zones recommended by the OSFM, as mandated by Government Code Section 51179, and amends the Corona Municipal Code to update the regulations regarding the fire hazard severity zones to be consistent with the updated map issued by the OSFM. Adoption of this Ordinance will not have an impact on the environment.

**PREPARED BY:** CINDI SCHMITZ, FIRE MARSHAL

**REVIEWED BY:** BRIAN YOUNG, FIRE CHIEF

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Exhibit 1 – Ordinance No. 3418 (Redline)
2. Exhibit 2 – Ordinance No. 3418 (Final)
3. Exhibit 3 – Local Responsibility Area – Fire Hazard Severity Zones Map dated March 24, 2025