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AB-1457 Wildfires: training: defensible space: inspections. (2025-2026)

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AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MAY 23, 2025

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE— 2025–2026 REGULAR SESSION

ASSEMBLY BILL

NO. 1457

Introduced by Assembly Member Bryan

February 21, 2025

An act to amend Sections 4291.5 and 4291.6 of the Public Resources Code, relating to fire protection.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 1457, as amended, Bryan. Wildfires: ~~training programs:~~ *training:* defensible space: inspections.

Existing law requires the Director of Forestry and Fire Protection, until January 1, 2026, to establish a statewide program to allow ~~qualifying entities who~~ *certain persons and entities that* have completed ~~a specific training program,~~ *training developed by the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection for these purposes* to support and augment the ~~Department of Forestry and Fire Protection department~~ in its defensible space and home hardening assessment and education ~~efforts and efforts.~~ *Existing law* requires the director to establish a common reporting platform that allows defensible space and home hardening assessment ~~data,~~ *data* collected by ~~qualifying entities,~~ *those persons and entities* to be reported to the department, ~~among other things, and authorizes the department to use that data to direct its inspection and enforcement resources and for other specified purposes.~~

~~Existing law requires the department, until January 1, 2026, to develop and implement a training program for individuals to support and augment the department in its defensible and home hardening assessment and public education efforts. Existing law requires the training program to do specified things.~~

This bill would *extend the operation of the program described above indefinitely, and would* require the ~~training program~~ *training,* *beginning July 1, 2026,* to include training consistent with the "Home Ignition Zone/Defensible Space Inspector" course plan, established by the State Fire Marshal, to ensure that individuals are trained to conduct home ignition zone inspections. ~~The bill would also extend the operative date of both programs described above indefinitely.~~

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: no

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. Section 4291.5 of the Public Resources Code is amended to read:

4291.5. (a) For purposes of this section, the following definitions apply:

(1) "Home hardening" means the replacement or repair of structural features that are affixed to the property with features that are in compliance with Chapter 7A (commencing with Section 701A.1) of Title 24 of the California Code of Regulations.

(2) "Qualified entities" means the following entities that have completed the program developed and received a certification, pursuant to Section 4291.6:

(A) Counties, state conservancies, special districts, and other political subdivisions of the state.

(B) Members of the California Conservation Corps, the Board of Commissioners under California Volunteers described in Section 8411 of the Government Code, local conservation corps, resource conservation districts, fire safe councils, and Firewise USA organizations.

(C) University of California fire ~~advisors~~ **advisers**.

(D) Registered Professional Foresters.

(E) Other entities or individuals deemed appropriate by the director.

(3) "Wildfire safety improvements" mean wildfire resilience and fire safety improvements, including measures for home hardening, the creation of defensible space, and other appropriate fuel reduction activities, to residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, or other real property identified by the State Fire Marshal, in consultation with the director.

(b) The director shall establish a statewide program to allow qualified entities to support and augment the department in its defensible space and home hardening assessment and education efforts. Qualified entities participating in the program shall be authorized by the director to conduct defensible space assessments to assess compliance with Section 4291 within the state responsibility area, educate property owners about wildfire safety improvements that may be undertaken to harden a structure and make it more resistant to fire, and assess whether wildfire safety improvements have been completed in or on a structure.

(c) (1) The director shall establish a common reporting platform that allows defensible space and home hardening assessment data, collected by the qualified entities, to be reported to the department and shall establish any necessary quality control measure to ensure that the assessment data is accurate and reliable.

(2) The department shall compile the data submitted pursuant to paragraph (1).

(d) The director may use the defensible space and home hardening assessment data to do any of the following:

(1) Direct inspection and enforcement resources away from landowners who meet or exceed the department's standards and regulations for maintaining defensible space.

(2) Direct inspection and enforcement resources toward landowners who do not meet the department's standards and regulations for maintaining defensible space.

(3) Direct educational resources toward landowners who own or maintain structures that can be hardened to make them more resistant to fire.

(4) Assist in estimating defensible space compliance in the state responsibility area.

(e) The department may expand or amend existing programs for the implementation of this section.

(f) This section does not grant any right of entry onto private land or regulatory or enforcement authority to participating qualified entities.

(g) Any local governmental entity that is qualified to conduct defensible space assessments pursuant to this section in very high and high fire hazard severity zones, as identified by the State Fire Marshal pursuant to Section 51178 of the Government Code or Article 9 (commencing with Section 4201) of this chapter or by a local agency pursuant to Section 51179 of the Government Code and reports that information to the department, shall report that information using the common reporting platform established pursuant to subdivision (c).

(h) (1) On December 31, 2023, and annually thereafter, the department shall report to the Legislature all defensible space data collected pursuant to paragraph (2) of subdivision (c). The report may include information on the proportion of unique parcels that were inspected, the degree of compliance with requirements set forth in Section 4291, any enforcement actions that may have been taken for noncompliant parcels, and the proportion of parcels that were found to be in compliance across jurisdictions. At minimum, the report shall include data with sufficient detail to facilitate comparisons of community compliance with the

requirements of Section 4291 between local governmental entities qualified to conduct defensible space assessments pursuant to this section and local governmental entities that are not.

(2) A report submitted pursuant to this subdivision shall be submitted in compliance with Section 9795 of the Government Code.

SEC. 2. Section 4291.6 of the Public Resources Code is amended to read:

4291.6. (a) (1) The Legislature finds and declares that the use of trained volunteers to assist homeowners and fire agencies in achieving compliance with defensible space requirements will provide multiple benefits, including all of the following:

(A) Creating a significant public benefit by reducing the risk of the spread of wildfire.

(B) Creating significant savings for fire agencies by increasing general compliance with defensible space requirements, and thereby reducing the volume of inspections required by public agencies.

(C) Allowing fire agencies to focus their defensible space regulatory enforcement on landowners who are not in compliance after suggestions for voluntary compliance from trained volunteers.

(2) It is further the intent of the Legislature that the department do both of the following:

(A) Establish a pilot program using trained volunteers with any costs for the pilot project coming from the existing funds made available to the department from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, created pursuant to Section 16428.8 of the Government Code.

(B) Consider using the services of the California Fire Science Consortium and the Regional Forest and Fire Capacity program at the Natural Resources Agency to implement this section.

(b) The department shall develop and implement a training program to train individuals to support and augment the department in its defensible space and home hardening assessment and public education efforts. The training program shall do all of the following:

(1) Provide for consistent training for third-party assessors who shall function to provide nonregulatory assistance to homeowners to reduce fire risk and to achieve compliance with defensible space requirements.

(2) Ensure that all defensible space and home hardening assessment and education programs undertaken by the department and by third parties are conducted to the same standard and use coordinated messaging, including messages at www.readyforwildfire.org or a successor internet website, as updated by the department.

(3) ~~Provide~~ *Beginning July 1, 2026, provide* training consistent with the "Home Ignition Zone/Defensible Space Inspector" course plan, established by the State Fire Marshal, in order to ensure that individuals are trained to conduct home ignition zone inspections.

(c) Upon an individual's successful completion of the training program, the department shall issue a certification of completion to the individual.