



June 28, 2021

TO: District Superintendents  
District Business Officials  
District Maintenance Directors

FROM: Safety & Loss Control Department

SUBJECT: Wildfire Risk Mitigation

With the onset of early summer high temperatures and the declaration of extreme or exceptional drought in many areas of California, there is concern for a significant wildfire season in 2021. According to CalFire the ten high hazard counties include:

- Amador
- Calaveras
- El Dorado
- Fresno
- Kern
- Madera
- Mariposa
- Placer
- Tulare
- Tuolumne

SISC has districts in seven of the ten counties.

The risk of fire to structures occurs not only by direct fire contact to structures; but also from burning embers carried in the wind contacting with landscape vegetation; and radiant heat that preheats materials creating a higher risk of fire from direct heat.

Some basic measures school districts can take to reduce the potential of structure loss to fire are:

- Clear natural debris and dry brush to create a defensible space. This could vary by local law or ordinance. In mountainous, forest, brush and grass covered lands, state law extended the defensible space in January 2005, from 30 feet to 100 feet around structures and homes, but not beyond the property line. Public Resources Chapter 3, section 4291 includes more intense fuel reductions between 5 and 30 feet. This may

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*A Joint Powers Authority administered by the Kern County Superintendent of Schools Office, Mary C. Barlow, Superintendent*

include dead vegetation near roofs and decks, as well as gutters. A broad defensible space not only reduces the risk of structure fire, but also allows for increased safety to evacuate the structure and access for firefighters to fight the fire.

- Close off vents in attics and crawl spaces or shield them with mesh screen. This will reduce the potential of burning embers blowing into your structures.
- Protect propane tanks and other external fuel sources.
- Do not park commercial vehicles on dry vegetation.
- Clean up any spilled gas or motor oil.

SISC recognizes that many district may be offering additional summer school options to make up for learning challenges during COVID-19. We encourage districts to review the resources available through California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES), including School Emergency Planning & Safety, which includes a Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) resource at [Cal OES Internet Home For Schools & Educators](#)

When wildfires occur, the risks extend beyond fire, to damages caused by smoke and ash. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) shared a resource guide from ASHRAE called “Planning Framework for Protecting Commercial Building Occupants from Smoke During Wildfire Events”. The framework includes a Smoke Readiness Plan, checklist for HVAC System, and cautions to consider when upgrading air filters. This document is available [at Guidance Available to Prepare Schools, Commercial and Public Buildings for Wildfire Smoke | EPA Science Matters Newsletter | US EPA](#)

If your district is located in a high risk for wildfire, you may want to consult with your local fire officials, including city, county, state or bureau of land management. The annual inspection by fire officials is a good time to ask for any additional recommendations they may have to protect district property from fire risks.