
CONSENT

Bill No: AB 1457
Author: Bryan (D)
Amended: 5/23/25 in Assembly
Vote: 21

SENATE NATURAL RES. & WATER COMMITTEE: 7-0, 7/16/25
AYES: Limón, Seyarto, Allen, Grove, Hurtado, Laird, Stern

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: Senate Rule 28.8

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 79-0, 6/3/25 - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: Wildfires: training: defensible space: inspections

SOURCE: Author

DIGEST: This bill repeals the sunset provision from the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Department)’s “qualified entities” program, and requires the program’s curriculum to conform to the Department’s “Home Ignition Zone/Defensible Space Inspector” course plan.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Requires the Department to establish a statewide program to allowed qualified entities, as defined, to support and augment the Department’s efforts in defensible space and home hardening assessments (Public Resources Code (PRC) §4291.5).
- 2) Requires the Department to establish a common reporting platform that allows qualified entities to submit assessment data (PRC §4291.5(c)).
- 3) Sunsets the qualified entities program on January 1, 2026 (PRC §4291.5(i)).

- 4) Establishes the State Responsibility Area (SRA) as the lands where the State has the financial responsibility for the prevention and suppression of wildfires (PRC §4102).
- 5) Establishes requirements for “defensible space” around structures in the SRA (PRC §4291).

Background

- 1) *Defensible Space Inspectors*. The Department annually hires temporary employees as Defensible Space Inspectors (DSIs), in the Forestry Aide classification, to conduct defensible space inspections and interact with the public to provide fire prevention information. The Department hires approximately 150 DSIs on a temporary (up to 9 months) basis each year.
- 2) *Defensible Space Inspection Dashboard*. The Department publishes a public, online dashboard demonstrating the progress of inspections towards the Department’s annual goal (by fiscal year (FY)) of 250,000 defensible space inspections. As of May 31, 2025, in FY 24-25, the Department conducted 268,487 inspections in the SRA. In the previous FY, 23-24, the Department completed 299,273 inspections. Most of the inspections in FY 23-24 took place between March and August, inclusive. In FY 24-25, September, October, November, and May saw a greater number of inspections than the previous year.
- 3) *Defensible Space Compliance*. In FY 23-24, 30,506 properties in the SRA received initial notices of noncompliance. That number dropped to 7,946 second noncompliance notices, and 1,695 third noncompliance notices. As of May 31, 2025, in FY 24-25, 30,506 properties received initial notices of noncompliance. That number dropped to 7,946 properties receiving second notices of noncompliance, and 1,695 receiving third notices.
- 4) *Qualified Entities Program*. Existing law requires the Department to establish a statewide program to allow qualified entities, as defined, to support and augment the Department’s efforts in defensible space and home hardening assessments (PRC §4291.5). Qualified entities are those who have completed training by the Department and received a certificate from the program. These entities include:
 - 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, local conservation corps, resource conservation districts, fire safe councils, and Firewise USA organizations, as provided.
- c) University of California fire advisors.
- d) Registered Professional Foresters.
- e) Other entities or individuals deemed appropriate by the Director of the Department.

Qualified entities are authorized by the Director of the Department to conduct defensible space assessments regarding compliance with defensible space requirements, educate property owners about home hardening, and assess whether wildfire safety improvements have been made in or on a structure. The Director of the Department is required to establish a common reporting platform that allows qualified entities to submit assessment data (PRC §4291.5(c)).

As of May 31, 2025, in FY 2024 - 2025, qualified entities conducted 2,027 defensible space assessments in the SRA. The California Conservation Corps conducted most of them, 1,741; Fire Safe Councils conducted 32; and other qualified entities conducted 254. A plurality of the assessments (245) were conducted in El Dorado County; 207 in Santa Cruz County; 194 in Nevada County; 183 in Mono County; 133 in Los Angeles County; 131 in San Diego County; and 103 in Humboldt County. Other counties saw fewer than 100 assessments by qualified entities. Existing law sunsets this program on January 1, 2026 (PRC §4291.5(i)).

- 5) *Statewide Fire Training.* Statewide Fire Training (SFT) is a division of the Department through the Office of the State Fire Marshal that establishes, develops, and delivers standardized training and education for the California fire service. SFT is responsible for the Fire Service Training and Education Program (FSTEP), which produces continuing education and topic-specific training courses.

The “Home Ignition Zone/Defensible Space Inspector” course provides the skills and knowledge needed to perform the duties of a Home Ignition Zone/Defensible Space Inspector (HIZ/DSI) including roles and responsibilities relating to wildfire in the natural and built environment, codes and regulations, defensible space, home hardening, and the inspection process. It would be appropriate to align the Department’s trained volunteer program with this course to ensure statewide consistency between and among volunteers conducting home ignition zone or defensible space inspections.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

SUPPORT: (Verified 08/25/25)

California Fire Chiefs Association
Fire Districts Association of California
Pacific Forest Trust
US Green Building Council California

OPPOSITION: (Verified 08/25/25)

None received

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: According to the author, “Meeting defensible space requirements is the responsibility of a property owner, but many property owners may lack the time, resources, tools, or wherewithal to manage their yards to sufficiently maintain defensible space from a fire. The state has a force of defensible space inspectors that make sure residents are complying with the requirements, and provide resources and education where property owners need assistance. But, those inspectors simply cannot inspect every property across the state. AB 1457 augments the training requirements for individuals who support [the Department] in its defensible space and home hardening assessment and public education efforts.”

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 79-0, 6/3/25

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Chen, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

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8/27/25 16:18:00

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