



City cleared fuel modification- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's):

Your neighborhood was recently treated by City contract crews to reduce wildfire threats to occupied structures. Fire prevention fuel modification has been conducted to remove 50% of shrub fuels and 80% of grasses and herbs from a 100-foot wide strip between structures and native vegetation. Tree-form plant species within that 100 feet were “limbed up” and cleaned of dead portions to reduce their ignitability but left in place. This fuel modification should reduce structural threats from wildfire through a reduction in potential flame lengths and fire line intensity by 70% from what existed before treatment. This will provide firefighters a better opportunity to protect fire- threatened structures. The following are frequently asked questions regarding this treatment:

1. Why was dead, cut material left on the ground after fuel modification?

Barren hillsides in the treatment area are subject to severe erosion and debris flow during heavy rains. Project geologists have recommended that a layer of cut natural debris be left on slopes to help prevent unwanted erosion. This layer also keeps invasive weeds in check and aids in retaining plant moisture. This layer is also a requirement of the project’s Coastal Development Permit. These sites will “green-up” with the next season’s rainfall and the material should not be removed by property owners. Removal also violates conditions of the Coastal Development Permit and could expose the property owner to Coastal Act and other liability if they remove the material or contribute to erosion. The left-over ground cover is far less flammable than the standing vegetation and no longer presents major wildfire risk.

2. Why was my property omitted from the fuel modification work?

Common reasons for property omission and non-treatment include:

- a. The site already had a lack of fuels meeting project fuel treatment prescription
- b. The site is too steep to clear and is composed of rock faces or steep slopes that prevent crew access, or that offer reduced fire potential due to existing site characteristics
- c. The site had already been modified by the homeowner through weed abatement or private fuels clearance that meets City and environmental constraints
- d. Homeowners have completed non-permitted structural enhancements such as retaining walls, etc. where the City cannot assume public liability for these private improvements
- e. The homeowner declined to provide trespass permission for the project to clear fuels
- f. The site is characterized as a water course. In this case only dead or invasive plant materials were removed from the water course to prevent severe runoff or erosion
- g. Small patches of native vegetation are left as a buffer around sensitive plant species, when found



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3. Can the property owner elect to change treatment methods and utilize goats or hand treatment in the future? How intense or intrusive will annual maintenance be?

The selection of treatment methods is determined by the Coastal Commission and other environmental permitting following extensive environmental review. The treatment method is prescribed for each site in the project and may not be arbitrarily changed by the City or the property owner.

The first-year clearance is a significant effort. Annual maintenance is far less intrusive and can be completed with less time and work effort than the initial year, no more than a couple days work on any given site. The City intends to maintain the site annually in perpetuity.

4. Is a property owner required to participate in the fuel modification project? Does participation relieve the property owner from City weed abatement requirements?

All project fuel modification conducted by the City is free of charge to the property owner. Property owners must sign a trespass agreement with the fire department for crews to enter their property and conduct clearance. The determination to participate is strictly voluntary, however if authorized must be completed in accordance with project environmental permitting. Access authorization may be revoked by the property owner; however, the property may still be required to be cleared of flammable vegetation under fire code requirements at property owner expense. Any site clearance must also be conducted in accordance with environmental permitting, same as required of the project. Only clearance conducted by the project will be funded by the City. Property owner participation in the project does not relieve the property from City weed abatement requirements which must be completed at property owner expense.

MORE QUESTIONS? Please feel free to contact the Laguna Beach Fire Department at (949)497-0756 if you have any additional questions.



Before



After