



Los Altos Hills County Fire District
Integrated Hazardous Fuel Reduction Program
Home Ignition Zone (HIZ) Assessment and Rebate Program Guidelines
ADVISORY
Issued on March 21, 2023
Revised October 9, 2024

Introduction. The Los Altos Hills County Fire District (District or LAHCFD) Residential-focused Integrated Hazardous Fuel Reduction (IHFR) Program provides residents with vegetation mitigation services based on fire science principles and the District’s Community Wildland Protection Plan (CWPP) Annex 4. The Program helps residents harden their property to better withstand destruction by fires and build neighborhood resilience.

This program aligns with the 2023-2027 Strategic Plan Goal 1: Prevention, Protection, and Resiliency, by incentivizing residents to take on large vegetation mitigation efforts, educating residents on how to create defensible space around their property, and strengthening community resiliency throughout the District.

Residential-focused IHFR services include the Home Ignition Zone (HIZ) Assessment and Rebate Program, the Defensible Space Brush Chipping and Debris Removal Program, and the Defensible Space Fire Fuel Reduction Monthly Drop-off Program at Foothill College. Residents with property along evacuation road hardening projects are also invited to participate in the removal of hazardous fuels abutting the roadway by participating in a Right of Entry (ROE) Program.

HIZ Assessment and Rebate Program. The District contracts with Santa Clara County FireSafe Council (FSC) to manage and operate the HIZ Assessment and Rebate Program.

1. The HIZ Assessment examines possible hazardous fire fuel risks within the defensible space of homes and other structures. Specifically, the assessment identifies hazardous vegetation and brush (fire fuels) and proposes steps to mitigate these risks to reduce destruction and damage to homes, buildings, and property during fire and wildfire events.
2. To incentivize residents to act on this urgent life and safety concern, strengthen neighborhood resiliency, and reduce the costs to residents for large vegetation mitigation efforts that create defensible space around the home and buildings, the Program offers matching rebates for implementation of the HIZ Assessment recommendations.

- a. Residents may apply for 50% of the cost of implementing the qualifying HIZ vegetation recommendations for up to \$3,000 per property, per year. Structural and home hardening recommendations are supplied in an HIZ assessment but are not rebate-eligible. To qualify for the Rebate Program, residents are required to use a licensed contractor for vegetation removal, brush cutting, and tree trimming. Tree removal does not qualify for a rebate. **Trees are defined as saplings over 8 inches in diameter at breast height (DBH).**
 - b. HIZ recommendations must be completed, and rebate requests must be submitted **within 6 months of the HIZ Assessment**. If a resident is unable to complete the HIZ recommendations within the 6-month window due to extenuating circumstances, the resident may apply to FSC for an extension. A District representative will review the request and determine if a reasonable extension is warranted. The ruling by the District representative is final. If the District representative concludes that a resident missed the 6-month deadline and is not eligible for an extension, the resident will lose eligibility for the HIZ Rebate Program for the remainder of the calendar year. However, residents who do not receive rebates will still benefit from the HIZ Assessment service and are encouraged to implement the HIZ recommendations.
 - c. Rebate Processing: Residents shall provide the FSC with after photos of qualifying rebate-eligible items and **itemized** licensed contractor invoices to verify expenses. Once all invoices have been submitted to the FSC, the resident may request that the rebate be processed. The FSC will process one rebate per assessment.
3. Residents can learn more about the HIZ Assessment and Rebate Program and register online: <https://www.defensiblespacereport.org/lah/address/requestcode>
 4. HIZ Assessment requests are scheduled on a first come, first serve basis, and are limited in number per month. Rebates are payable from FSC after verification by a District representative that the HIZ recommendations were implemented, and rebate requirements are satisfied. Rebates are subject to District approval and funding availability.
 5. HIZ Assessment and Rebate Program services include:
 - a. Specific and personalized property assessments and recommendations on how residents can create and maintain a 100-ft defensive space zone around their home and structures on their property,
 - b. Resident education on hardening properties by identifying and removing hazardous brush and vegetation (fire fuels) to make properties more defensible in the event of a wildfire and increasing fire safety for the neighborhood,
 - c. Resident education on maintaining property hygiene once hazardous fire fuels are reduced or eliminated,
 - d. Resident education on resources for wildfire mitigation and District programs and resources, include:
 - i. HIZ Assessments of resident's property,
 - ii. Matching Rebate Program to encourage residents to implement the HIZ Assessment recommendations,
 - iii. Monthly Defensible Space Brush Chipping and Debris Removal Program,
 - iv. Defensible Space Fuel Reduction Monthly Drop-off Program at Foothill College,
 - v. Emergency preparedness workshops and training for residents offered by the District in conjunction with Santa Clara County FireSafe Council and Santa Clara

- County Fire Department,
- vi. Neighborhood Networks to promote evacuation planning, drills, and neighborhood resiliency,
- vii. Residents with property along evacuation road hardening projects are also invited to participate in the removal of hazardous fuels abutting the roadway by participating in a Right of Entry (ROE) Program,
- viii. Supporting residents' efforts to establish Firewise USA Communities in neighborhoods, and
- ix. Promoting and supporting resident neighborhood and resiliency in preparation and response to emergencies and disaster events.

6. Activities that are eligible for the Rebate Program.

The HIZ Assessment will include recommendations on how to create defensible space and how to harden homes and structures on a property, both of which increase fire safety on a property. However, only defensible space hazardous fire fuel removal activities performed by a licensed contractor, that are within the 0 – 100ft. defensible space zone, are eligible for the rebate program. Tree removal is not eligible for the Rebate Program. Please review the defensible space diagram at the end of this Advisory.

Examples of **Rebate-eligible activities** include (this list is not exhaustive and more details for the specific recommendation will be provided in the Assessment):

- Cutting or removing annual grasses and weeds within the 100-ft zone
- Removing grass and weed clippings, leaf, and needle litter within the 100-ft zone
- Removing clippings, leaf and needle litter, or other vegetation debris from gutters, from porch surfaces, or from under porches and decks
- Limbing any trees with branches within 10 feet of chimney or stovepipe outlet, or limbs overhanging structures
- Limbing or clearing vegetation that may create a “fire ladder” within the 100-ft zone. Tree removal is excluded.
- Removing vegetation within the immediate or 5-ft zone, or Zone 0. Tree removal is excluded.
- Removing hazardous vegetation (bamboo, juniper, pampas, jubata, broom, other)
- Creating horizontal spacing between vegetation
- Removing vegetation that may impede roadway access or are prone to ignition. Tree removal is excluded.

Examples of activities that are **not rebate-eligible**, but are encouraged to improve property and community safety, include:

- Removing dead, diseased or dying trees
- Removing and trimming grasses, weeds, tree limbs, brush, and bushes outside of the 100-ft zone
- Clearing non-vegetation combustibles from around propane tanks
- Replacing combustible items like natural fiber doormats or wooden furniture with non-combustible items
- Moving stored lumber, wood products, building materials, or other combustibles out of the 100-ft zone
- Home hardening and hardscape installations, such as replacing or repairing parts of the home with non-combustible materials or safer materials (i.e., metal or fire-resistant roofing, metal

gutters, multi-pane windows, brick or masonry siding, ember-resistant roofs, vents, and screens, etc.) or adding hardscapes such as concrete, tiles, rock, and metal gates.

The lists are not inclusive of all examples.

When a resident receives the HIZ Assessment from the FSC representative, the recommendations will indicate whether the activities or improvements are eligible for the rebate. The resident may choose to implement any recommendation from the assessment, but only those recommendations indicated as 'eligible' will be considered as part of the rebate application. The District determination of the eligibility for the rebate is final.

Program Goals. The overarching goal of the HIZ Rebate program is to make the broader community safer. Specifically, by participating in the Residential IHFR Program, residents will learn: 1) how to identify hazardous fire fuels; 2) what resources are available for removal of fire fuels to harden their property; 3) how to create and maintain defensive zones around structures; and 4) how to establish hazardous fire fuel mitigation as a neighborhood effort through Firewise USA.

These programs and actions will result in more informed residents and safer neighborhoods and will enable residents to prepare their property to be more resilient to fires and wildfires. This may help with insurance renewals and potential rate discounts. Contact your insurance provider to determine eligibility.

General Comments

The District's IHFR Program, including the HIZ Assessment and Rebate Program, is subject to funding availability, staff availability, and the requirements and procedures developed by the District's Board of Commissioners. The District does not guarantee services for each request, and the availability of services and programs may vary from year to year. The District makes the final decision if activities and improvements on the property are eligible and qualify for the Rebate Program.

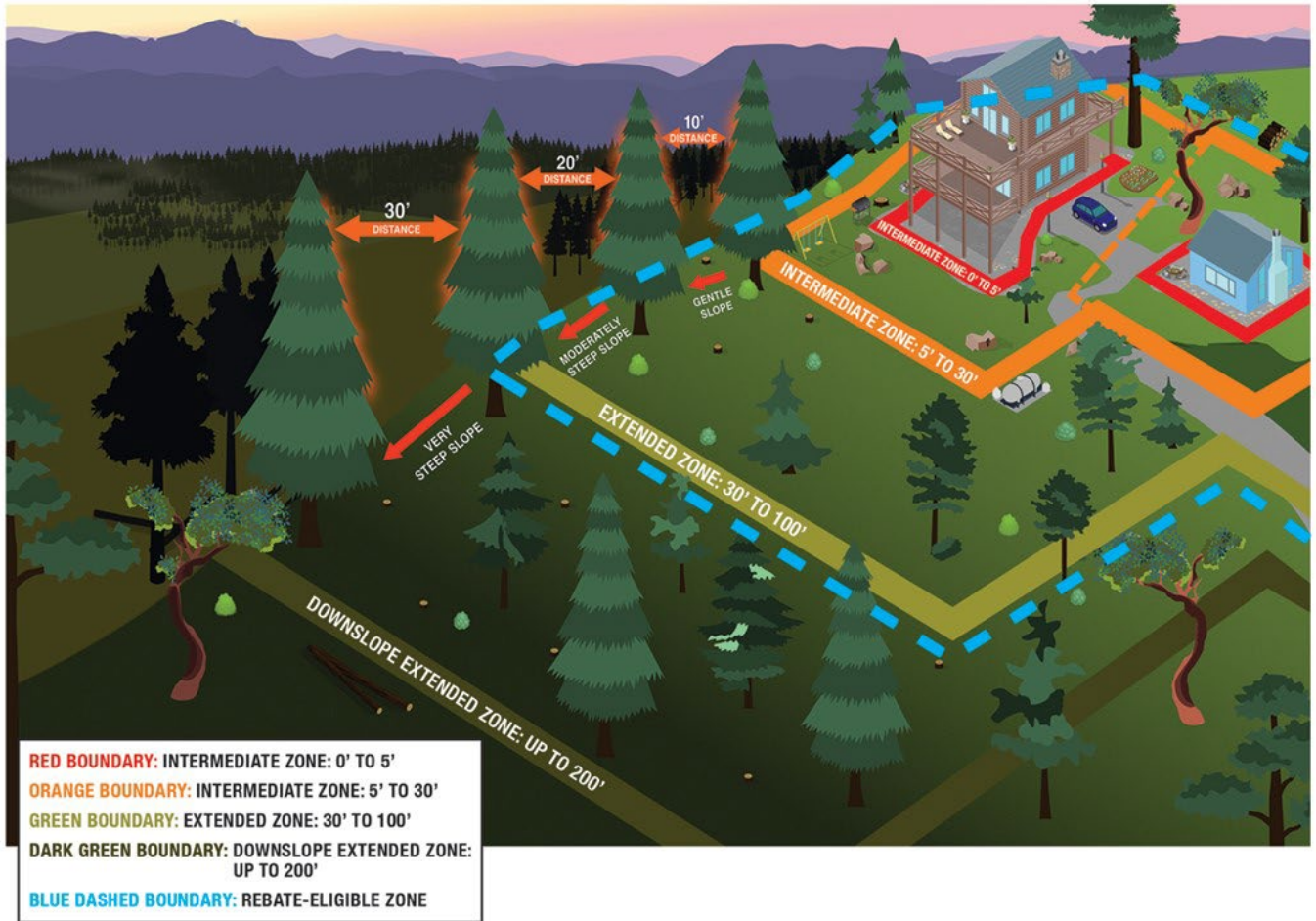
The Integrated Hazardous Fuel Reduction Programs (IHFR) may change and adapt as fire prevention measures change and new strategies, priorities, and best practices for fire fuel reduction are developed. **This Advisory is intended to be a living document that will be updated and revised as the HIZ Assessment and Rebate Program process and operations develop.**

Due to the increasing impact of drought, pathogens, and environmental conditions that negatively affects trees, and brush and vegetation buildup, the District has received an increasing number of requests for hazardous vegetation mitigation services from residents. Residents are encouraged to take personal action and make arrangements to remove hazardous fire fuels, vegetation, and dead, dying or diseased trees and brush on their property.

Property owners are responsible for the care, safety and removal of hazardous fire fuels, vegetation, and brush on their property. The District's Residential IHFR Program is designed to increase fire prevention and protection but does not replace residents' obligation to maintain their property safely and remove hazardous fire fuels, vegetation, hazardous trees, and brush.

The IHFR Program uses fire science principles to help residents make their properties more resilient to events of destruction by nature. District programs do not warranty that homes and structures will survive in the event of a fire, wildfire, or other disaster.

Attachment: Defensible Space Illustration



End of Advisory