



# California — Building Codes & the Wildland-Urban Interface

## What is California's Building Code and how does it work?

The minimum standards for design and construction of a building - such as the fire safety, structural integrity, and life protection - are outlined in model codes, which are developed through the International Code Council's code development process and serve as a basis for states to adopt. California's building codes - the California Building Standards Code (California Code of Regulations, Title 24) - are a compilation of provisions adopted directly from model codes, amendments to provisions from model codes, and standards that are approved by the California Building Standards Commission (CBSC). Local jurisdictions can then adopt these codes and make further amendments, provided they meet the established minimum standards.<sup>2</sup> California updates the Title 24 triennially, through public engagement, and in 2024, such processes occurred to prepare the state for the adoption of the 2025 edition of Title 24, effective January 1, 2026.

## What is Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI)?

The Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) is the zone of transition between unoccupied land and human development. It is the area or zone where structures and other human development meet or intermingle with wildland or vegetative fuels that are a fire hazard associated with the built environment.<sup>1</sup>

## What is California's WUI code?

A Wildland-Urban Interface Code, or WUI Code, establishes the minimum requirements for the safeguarding of life and property from the hazards of wildfire in designated WUI areas. These provisions apply to land use – such as defensible space and vegetation management requirements – as well as the built environment – such as outlining methods of construction for exterior wildfire exposure.

WUI provisions can be found in Chapter 7A of the California Building Code, Chapter 49 of the California Fire Code, and Section R337 of the California Residential Code. Chapter 7A has the requirements that apply to buildings in WUI-designated areas while Chapter 49 of the Fire Code contains the minimum requirements to mitigate conditions that might cause a fire to spread to a structure from the landscape, as well as for those features that allow for more effective firefighting operations.

This criteria was initially adopted in 2008 and has undergone multiple revisions as part of the iterative California code development process, integrating the most recent insights and scientific advancements from technical experts in the field. As homes are renovated or built, building them to modern codes and standards ensures that the latest construction methods are used.

## Building codes - A consensus based approach

As building science and research is constantly evolving, consensus code development allows for the latest science and engineering to be continuously incorporated into updated codes every three years so that such codes are never stagnant and reflect the latest research to be used. The codes are developed through the technical expertise of engineers, architects, academics, building code officials, and other industry professionals who provide input during the process. This collaborative process results in structures and communities that benefit from the most up-to-date scientific advancements in fire safety, structural integrity, and life protection.

As such, code development must remain a collective, iterative process allowing balanced input to recognize the latest means and methods of construction. **Thus, aligning legislation with CA Title 24 helps uphold the integrity of the most up to date and informed building and fire science practices.**



