

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY FOR FIRE SAFETY EVALUATION OF EXISTING ROADS

Sonoma County Code Chapter 13, Article V “Fire Safe Standards” sets forth the requirements to comply with Public Resources Code section 4290 and California Code of Regulations, Title 14 Natural Resources Code, Division 1-5, Chapter 7, Subchapter 2, Article 1-5, SRA Fire Safe Regulations. This Administrative Policy establishes the County’s evaluation process of existing roads to meet the Fire Safe Standards, and is incorporated by reference into Sonoma County Code, Chapter 13, Article V, Sec. 13-25(f).

MINIMUM ROAD STANDARDS

A Fire Inspector shall prepare a fire access road evaluation for all development approvals subject to Sonoma County Code Chapter 13, Article V that are served by an existing road. The evaluation shall confirm that the proposed development meets or exceeds the below requirements, and the proposed development shall be reasonably accessed and served in the case of a wildfire, with adequate ingress, egress and the capacity for concurrent evacuation and emergency response. These are the minimum County road standards that apply to existing roads serving legal parcels requiring ministerial and discretionary approvals.

1. Any existing private roads shall provide at least a twelve foot path of travel and at least an additional one foot of vegetation clearance on each side of the road. For discretionary approvals, additional turnouts and turnarounds or other mitigation measures may be required on existing roads to ensure concurrent fire engine access and civilian evacuation. Requirements for existing public roads serving discretionary development project approvals are in the Sonoma County TPW and PRMD Guidelines for Traffic Impact Studies. <https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/TPW/Roads/Services/Data-and-Resources/Traffic-Study-Guidelines>
2. All of the other provisions of Sonoma County Code Chapter 13, Article V Fire Safe Standards shall apply to any road if it is extended, reconstructed or improved pursuant to a development approval, but only as to the portion of the road that is extended, reconstructed or improved.
3. All roads shall comply with Sonoma County Code Chapter 13, Article V, Division C, Signing and Building Numbering.
4. All roads shall have vertical clearances that conform to the requirements in California Vehicle Code. This requires a vertical clearance of at least 13’ 6” to ensure fire engine access.
5. Except as otherwise provided in the Fire Safe Standards, all applications for development approvals shall be accompanied by plans, engineering calculations and other data necessary to determine compliance with the provisions of the Fire Safe Standards.

In addition, County staff also apply other applicable federal, state and local laws which may impose additional upgrades to existing roads or secondary access routes to serve development approval.