

Austin Wildland-Urban Interface Code

- A Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) Code will give the Austin Fire Department authority to enforce building construction and vegetation maintenance standards, which will improve the area for firefighting operations and reduce the likelihood of structures igniting from wildfire and of structure fires spreading to wildlands.
- The code will apply to all structures and premises in identified WUI areas within Austin’s zoning jurisdiction (City limits and limited purpose jurisdiction). Existing structures and uses will not need to change if legal at the time of code adoption and if they do not constitute a distinct danger to life or property. Remodeled or relocated structures will need to meet code for replaced components only.
- WUI areas will be mapped and defined by proximity to 40 acre or larger wildland areas.
- Permitting and inspections will follow processes already established in the fire code. Permits for hazardous uses and activities are covered in the Fire Code.
- Site plan review for wildfire safety will require type of ignition resistant construction and roof classification in addition to information already required by the City’s Land Development and fire codes; topography, access roads, landscape and vegetation details, locations of structures, overhead utilities, and occupancy classification of buildings.
- Access and water supply are not included since they are already required by the Fire Code. Private driveways longer than 150 feet will need to meet apparatus access standards. A fire protection plan could be used to reduce a hazard severity rating and allow otherwise unpermitted uses.
- Hazard severity will be based on proximity to a 40 acre or greater wildland area, topography, and the wildland vegetation as a fuel type.
- Building Permits for ignition resistant construction will be required per the following table:

	Fire Hazard Severity					
	Moderate Hazard		High Hazard		Extreme Hazard	
	Water Supply ^b		Water Supply ^b		Water Supply ^b	
	Conforming ^d	Nonconforming ^e	Conforming ^d	Nonconforming ^e	Conforming ^d	Nonconforming ^e
Defensible Space ^c						
Nonconforming	R	R	R	R	R	NP
Conforming	NR	R	R	R	R	R
1.5 x Conforming	NR	NR	NR	R	R	R

R-required NR-not required NP-not permitted

- Components of ignition resistant construction:
 - Class A roof
 - Protection of eaves – Protect exposed undersides and fascia backsides with 1 hour fire-resistance rated if within 50 feet of 40 acre or more contiguous wildland fuels area. Beyond 50 feet enclose soffits with minimum ¾” material and no exposed rafter tails unless heavy timber.
 - Gutters and downspouts ignition resistant and debris preventive
 - Exterior walls within 50 feet of 40 acre or more contiguous wildland fuels area 1-hour fire-resistance-rated or other approved materials or methods
 - Underfloor areas enclosed with exception for exposed fire-resistance-rated construction
 - Appendages and projections such as unenclosed accessory structures, decks, and fences 1-hour fire resistance-rated or other approved method and underfloor areas over 10 percent or greater slopes enclosed with 1-hour fire-resistance-rated construction.
 - Exterior glazing (windows) within 50 feet of 40 acre or more contiguous wildland fuels area tempered glass, multilayered glazed panels, glass block or fire protection rating of not less than 20 minutes.

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- Exterior doors within 50 feet of 40 acre or more contiguous wildland fuels area required to be non-combustible or have a fire protection rating of not less than 20 minutes.
- Vents and openings:
 - Maximum 144 square inches (1 foot by 1 foot)
 - Screened with 1/8" noncombustible corrosion resistant mesh to prevent ember penetration unless penetration area is minimum 1- hour fire-resistance-rated, and does not collect flammable debris
 - Not allowed in certain soffit, eaves, and roof overhangs
 - Gable and end dormer vents not allowed within 10 feet of lot line
 - Underfloor ventilation openings as close to grade as possible
- Detached accessory structures within 50 feet of 40 acre or more contiguous wildland fuels area and less than 50 feet from a habitable structure exterior walls 1-hour fire-resistance-rated, underfloor enclosed if over 10 percent slope unless exposure is 1-hour fire-resistance-rated.
- Defensible space
 - Applies to new and existing buildings, structures, and premises within wildland-urban interface areas. Existing for distinct hazards such as structures close to wildland areas, structures not ignition resistant and/or not protected from embers, structures near steep slopes, limited access, lack of space or poor water supply for firefighting operations, vegetation that allows for high intensity fire or that can transfer fire to tree canopies, and/or lack of natural or built fire breaks.
 - Fuel modification distance determined by hazard severity (fuel modification is defined as the method of modifying fuel load by reducing the amount of non-fire resistive vegetation or altering the type of vegetation to reduce the fuel load)
 - Moderate severity – 30 feet
 - High severity – 50 feet
 - Extreme severity – 100 feet
 - Trees and vegetation must allow space for firefighting operations. The vegetation will not maintain fire intensity beyond an identified threshold. Maintain vegetation so that it does not allow fire to transfer to or be carried into tree canopies.
 - Remove dead vegetated material from ground, roofs, gutters, and trees to maintain minimum clearances for firefighting operations, lower fire intensity, and to prevent fire from transferring to or being carried in tree canopies.
- Administrative rules chapter in Fire Criteria Manual
 - Interpretations, standards, review and permitting procedures
 - Inputs used to develop areas map
 - Ignition resistant construction application
 - Defensible space
 - further define distinct hazard and rank contributing conditions
 - define non-fire resistive vegetation
 - define threshold for fire intensity
 - define characteristics of vegetation density, arrangement, and composition that would reduce fire intensity and reduce risk of fire spread to tree canopies
 - define clear area for fire suppression activities