



Hazardous Vegetation & Rubbish Abatement Program

Frequently Asked Questions

Why did I receive a notice for my vacant, unimproved property?

The mission of the City of Lake Elsinore's Hazardous Vegetation and Rubbish Abatement Program is for the removal of combustible fuel such as weeds, brush, dead trees, debris, fill dirt and rubbish from all unimproved, vacant parcels within the city limits.

Recently, your vacant, unimproved property was inspected for hazardous vegetation and/or rubbish and was identified as a property that contains vegetation and/or rubbish that can create health, fire and/or safety issues within the City.

This notice is an annual courtesy reminder, sent by the City's Fire Marshal, to property owners of vacant parcels within the City urging them to clear any vegetation and/or rubbish on your property within 45 days of the date of the notice. Please see the attached Hazardous Vegetation & Rubbish Abatement Standards for additional information.

After 45 days, the City will be conducting follow up inspections on all vacant properties. Properties not in compliance with Chapter 8.18 of the Lake Elsinore Municipal Code (LEMC) will be issued an official Notice of Violation and a fee may be imposed for non-compliance.

Usually I am notified much earlier in the year. Why am I just now receiving this notice?

This year, the City of Lake Elsinore completely amended its Hazardous Vegetation and Rubbish Abatement Program. This included hiring contractors and the implementation of new systems and software to more efficiently and effectively manage the program. As a result, this year's inspections and notices were slightly delayed. In the future, the Fire Marshal will determine the best time to officially begin inspecting and sending notices to property owners based on the weather and fire and safety risks.

I already cleared my property. Why am I still receiving this notice?

As part of the City's new program and procedures, all vacant properties are now being inspected individually for hazardous vegetation and/or rubbish. The date of this inspection is noted in the third paragraph of the notice. If you have cleared your property since the inspection date, you may disregard this notice. If it was cleared prior to the inspection, please refer to the attached Hazardous Vegetation & Rubbish Abatement Standards for additional information on the expectations for vacant, unimproved properties in the City.

There is debris and garbage on my property, and I didn't put it there – why am I responsible?

If you are the property owner, then you are exclusively responsible for maintaining the condition of that property per Chapter 8.18 of the LEMC.

I no longer own the property, why was I sent this notice?

Unfortunately, at times property owner records are not always up to date. Notices are sent to the last known owner on Riverside County's assessment roll. If you are no longer the owner, please let the Community Development Department know immediately by calling (951) 674-3124.

Can I request an extension?

Extensions may only be considered after a second notice is issued. Please contact us at (951) 674-3124 to request a 14-day extension. Extensions will only be considered if the parcel is not an immediate threat (fire hazard) to the surrounding area.

Where can I find a weed abatement contractor?

We suggest tree services, mowing services or weed control services, which are listed in various yellow pages under these headings. We recommend getting three bids and making sure contractors are licensed and provide proof of Workers Compensation and General Liability Insurance.

Do I have the right to an appeal hearing?

Yes. If you protest the code as it pertains to your parcel or if you want to request an exemption from clearing the property at this time, you must submit the appeal in writing to the Fire Marshal. Parcels cannot arbitrarily be exempted.

What will happen if I do nothing to the property and don't request an appeal hearing?

The property **will be cleared** by a City contractor and the property owner **will be billed for all costs** including an administrative fee for the abatement of the property per LEMC Chapter 8.18.

How do I know if a plant species is native?

Generally, if it is irrigated and living it is ornamental, if it is not irrigated and living it is native.

My neighbor has combustible vegetation within 100' of my house. Can I clear their property?

It is always best to contact the property owner to request permission to clear an adjacent property. If unsuccessful, please contact the Community Development Department to file a complaint at (951) 674-3124.

What roads are subject to the 10' clearance of combustible native habitat requirements on either side?

Any road or driveway that provides access to a structure is defined as a fire apparatus access roadway and subject to these clearing requirements.

What does it mean to maintain horizontal clearance of vegetation alongside a roadway?

Any road must be maintained to its improved (graded or paved) width; nothing may encroach upon the roadway or driveway that reduces its original width.

What roads are subject to the 13' 6" vertical clearance requirements and what is included in this requirement?

All roads and driveways as defined above. This pertains to any and all obstructions within 13' 6" of the ground that are directly overhead of the roadway surface.

How do I cut vegetation on hillsides when it exists to prevent erosion?

The use of any cutting or trimming method that leaves the root structure intact is highly recommended. Usually by maintaining the vegetation 2 to 3 inches above the ground.

Can I burn vegetation?

No. Open burning for weed abatement and fire clearance is prohibited by the Air Quality Management District and the City.

Can I pile cut vegetation on site?

No. All cut vegetation must be removed, crushed and buried, or mulched and spread. If material is mulched, it must be spread to a depth no greater than three inches (3").

What does it mean to remove limbs within 8' of the ground?

Remove any branches that are within 8' of the ground and any ground litter under trees. It **does not** mean to cut trees to 8' tall.

What if my trees are not over 8' tall do I have to trim them?

Yes, though they only are required to be trimmed from the ground up to 1/3 of the height of the tree. Example: If a tree is 12 feet tall it would only be required to be trimmed 4 feet.

For more information please visit: www.Lake-Elsinore.org/hazardousvegetation