

## 12 Fire and Other Hazards

This chapter examines hazards related to fire risk and to underground storage and fuel tanks. Fire risk is being evaluated by the County in a separate study that will result in development of a new County Master Fire Protection Plan. This study is currently underway and has not yet been completed. Underground tank data come from the State Water Resources Control Board. After the discussion of these hazards, existing policies and policy options are presented. The Appendices include the policy evaluation worksheets for fire and other hazards.

### 12.1 FIRE HAZARDS

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Subsequent to an evaluation by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF), nearly three quarters of Humboldt County's land is identified as possibly containing substantial forest fire risks and hazards, pursuant to Section 4125 of the Public Resources Code (see Figure 12-1). The areas not prone to fire risk are concentrated in coastal and estuary land and the high (eastern) Klamath-Trinity watersheds.

CDF states, "the owner of this property is subject to the maintenance requirements of Section 4291 of the Public Resources Code. Additionally, it is not the state's responsibility to provide fire protection services to any building or structure located within the wildlands unless the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection has entered into a cooperative agreement with a local agency for those purposes pursuant to Section 4142 of the Public Resources Code."<sup>1</sup>

Fire hazard assessment is being conducted under a separate County study, in which the County will prepare a Master Fire Protection Plan. Predicated on concern that development outside existing fire protection districts may render response capabilities within the districts inadequate, this Plan will evaluate and quantify the County's fire service capacities and gaps; fire history; rural fire access inventory and mapping; fuel load inventories and fire modeling; development standards; and land ownership, vegetation, hydrology, and topography. This initial risk assessment and community input will inform the implementation plan, which assigns responsibility to the County and other jurisdictions for projects including policy and code revisions; improvements to the emergency service addressing system; fuels reduction; road maintenance and improvements; and improvements to Fire Departments.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> CDF, Humboldt County Natural Hazard Disclosure Fire Map at [www.fire.ca.gov/ab6/nhd12.pdf](http://www.fire.ca.gov/ab6/nhd12.pdf), viewed 30 Apr 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Humboldt County Community Development Services, *Proposal to Prepare a Master Fire Protection Plan*.

## **12.2 UST AND LUFT SITES**

The Division of Clean Water Programs (CWP), under the California State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB), is responsible for the regulation of waste discharges to land, including the documentation of underground storage tanks (USTs) and leaking underground fuel tanks (LUFTs).

### **UNDERGROUND STORAGE TANK (UST) SITES**

In order to legally store hazardous substances (e.g. industrial solvents, flammable liquids, and petroleum products) underground, UST owners must submit permits applications, demonstrating satisfactory tank maintenance and local groundwater testing, to the local Certified Unified Program Agency (CUPA) for approval. The CUPAs then add these sites to the SWRCB's GeoTracker (also known as Geographic Environment Information Management System or GEIMS) database for public access.

Water wells within 1,000 feet of a UST are at risk for contamination and must be documented in the permit. Small (holding 1,100 gallons or less) tanks on farms holding heating oil or machinery fuel are exempt from permitting, as are sumps, storm drains, and oil pipelines.

There are 13 USTs in unincorporated Humboldt County. Eight of these are in Garberville, six of which are within 1,000 feet of the Richardson's Grove KOA, Chimney Tree, and Garberville Company wells (see Table 12-1).

**Table 12-1: Underground Storage Tanks in Humboldt County**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Distance to Wells<sup>1</sup></i>
BO&T	120607 Highway 101, Orick	N/A
CHP	30 West Coast Rd., Redway	N/A
Earp's 76 Service & Subway	790 Redwood Dr., Garberville	790 ft.
Ed's Full Service	822 Redwood Dr., Garberville	486 ft.
Garberville Chevron	830 Redwood Dr., Garberville	381 ft.
HCDPW	310 Briceland Rd., Garberville	N/A
HPI	860 Redwood Dr., Garberville	260 ft.
HPI	600 Redwood Dr., Redway	N/A
Kneeland School District	9313 Kneeland Rd, Kneeland	N/A
PG&E	1328 Redwood Dr., Garberville	877 ft.
Pacific Bell	5.5 miles NE of Garberville	877 ft.
Pacific Bell	4 miles S of Scotia	N/A
Renner Petroleum #173	76 Bear Canyon Rd., Garberville	N/A

<sup>1</sup> Listed if near Richardson's Grove KOA, Chimney Tree, and Garberville Company wells; otherwise, not applicable.

Source: State Water Resources Control Board, 2002.

**Figure 12-1: Fire Hazard in Humboldt County**

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## **LEAKING UNDERGROUND FUEL TANK (LUFT) SITES**

LUFT reporting has recently transitioned from the filing of an Unauthorized Release (UR) form with the Regional Water Quality Control Boards (RWQCBs) to a direct upload to GeoTracker/GEIMS, allowing for multiple substances and multiple responsible parties to be entered and queried.

SWRCB lists 776 LUFTs in Humboldt County. While the majority of these sites appear to be in incorporated areas, at least 270 LUFT sites are located in the unincorporated County. Many of them are estimated to be within a half mile of public water wells.

In 1995, studies of fuel hydrocarbons (FHCs) in LUFTs conducted by the University of California and Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory concluded that LUFTs do not require as much corrective action as was previously thought. Benzene plumes, for example, were found to affect less than one-thousandth of one percent of the state's groundwater.

## **12.3 POLICY OPTIONS**

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This section focuses on fire and other hazards from a public policy perspective. In planning for future land use, the County must consider the various policy options for the issues identified in Phase I of the General Plan Update, which are summarized in the Critical Choices Report. These key questions help frame the issues for policy options for fire and other hazards. As background, the existing policies in the General Plan are presented, followed by a discussion of issues and policy options that respond to them. The policy evaluation worksheets for fire and other hazards are in the Appendix. This worksheet is provided as a tool for members of the public to evaluate policy options and indicate preferences for accepting, modifying or rejecting these options.

### **EXISTING POLICIES**

The County's Framework Plan (General Plan) establishes measures to minimize damage from fire. These policies are in Chapter 4, Section 4710.

#### ***GOAL***

To assure adequate fire protection for new development.

#### ***POLICIES***

1. Proposed development shall be adequately serviced by water supplies for fire protection or shall have a letter from an appropriate fire protection agency indicating that adequate fire protection can be provided.
2. Encourage clustered development to provide for more localized and effective fire protection measures.

3. Humboldt County should encourage the use of prescribed burning as a management tool for timber management purposes, livestock production, and enhancement of wildlife habitat.
4. Use the appropriate sections of the California Department of Forestry "Fire Safe Guides" as guidelines for review of residential development in rural areas, to be applied consistent with other plan policies.
5. Actively support and pursue the implementation recommendations of the Humboldt County Fire Chief's Association (see Fire Hazards Implementation, Section 5-2300.3).

(Policies 3, 4, and 5 also appear in the Hazard Section 3291 of the General Plan.)

## **ISSUE**

- *What is the County role in ensuring fire protection and risk reduction?*
- *What land use policies can effectively reduce risk and harm?*

Fire protection issues will be addressed in detail in the new Fire Protection Master Plan, currently under preparation. In addition to fire risks, other hazards exist in the County, which pose risks to nearby land uses.

**Option 12.1 Support the Board of Supervisors action to establish a County Fire Marshall position and develop a new Fire Protection Master Plan.** The new Fire Protection Master Plan being drafted, with the funding assistance from the U.S. Forest Service, will provide direction on how to most efficiently address the risks, intensity, and frequency of wildfires in Humboldt County. The County Fire Marshall position will provide much needed coordination in a County with multiple fire districts and departments. When the Fire Protection Master Plan is completed, recommendations will be incorporated into the General Plan Update for public consideration.

**Option 12.2 Establish development standards for new development adjacent to an identified hazard, such as a nuclear power plant, propane tanks, gas stations, pulp mills, etc.** Hazards other than fire also need to be addressed in the General Plan update. The potential impact from many hazards can be reduced by ensuring nearby developments are compatible with or have sufficient buffers and protections from the potential hazard source.

**ISSUE**

- *Do General Plan policies adequately compliment emergency service provider's plans and operational needs?*
- *How can land use planning aid emergency preparedness?*

The County has a new fire warden and is creating a new Countywide Fire Protection Master Plan. As part of this effort, opportunities for improving emergency response capabilities will be reviewed, and new policies and programs put in place, as warranted. . The following policy initiative is suggested as a first step toward better integration of hazard management and emergency response into County administration. Additional new policies may be developed as a result of the separate fire study being conducted by the County.

**Option 12.3 Promote the cooperation between the County, the California Division of Forestry, fire protection districts, and cities' law enforcement, fire, and emergency medical services, and support the required training of all personnel who may respond to an emergency, including emergencies involving hazardous materials.**

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