



Weed and Refuse Abatement Ordinance

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Weed and Refuse Abatement Ordinance?

On March 24, 2020, the Greenfield City Council adopted an Amendment to Chapter 8.16 of the Greenfield City Code. This amended ordinance deals specifically with property owners' responsibility to keep their property clear of hazardous vegetation and combustible refuse.

Who does this ordinance apply to?

This ordinance applies to all property owners within the city of Greenfield.

What is considered hazardous vegetation and combustible refuse?

Hazardous vegetation are dry weeds, grass, and/or other types of vegetation that could catch on fire easily and spread to nearby structures and adjacent properties. Typically, this means dried vegetation that is greater than 3 inches in height. Combustible refuse is garbage that can catch on fire, such as piles of junk or inoperable vehicles.

What about my lawn, plants, and shrubbery?

Green and maintained lawns, as well as maintained shrubs and plants, are not considered hazardous vegetation.

When am I required to cut my weeds?

Fire season normally starts around the middle of April and runs through December. Although, during times of drought, fire season can start early and end late. If the grass and weeds have dried up and changed color, property owners should make sure they are cut and safe.

How height low should my weeds and/or grass be cut?

Greenfield Fire Department has put together a set of standards that property owners can use to make sure their property is safe. Go to <https://ci.greenfield.ca.us/385/Greenfield-Fire> to download a copy of the standards.

How does the City notify me if my weeds are too long or I have combustible refuse on my property?

During normal years, the Fire Department begins drive by property inspections in May. When they come across a property that is not in compliance with the ordinance, they will take a picture of the property, leave a notice to abate the hazard on the property, and send the property owner a letter letting them know they need to abate the hazards on their property by a certain date.

Typically, the property owner will be given a minimum of 15 days’ notice to abate the hazards on their property. If they do not make the corrections within the designated time period, the City Council will hold a public hearing and sign a resolution to have the Fire Chief (or their designee) enter the property and abate the hazards.

Is there a fine or charge if the City has to abate the hazards on my property?

Yes and no. Yes, the City will send the property owner an invoice for the costs associated with notifying them and abating the hazards. The City will not impose a fine, but the city will recover the cost of having to take care of the problem. These costs can include personnel costs, equipment costs, and administrative fees. It’s safe to say that it will probably cost more money if the City has to take care of the problem than if the property owner takes care of the problem themselves.

Does the City make money when they take care of the abatement?

No, in fact the Fire Chief is required to provide the property owner with a cost breakdown of what it cost to abate the hazards. Remember, these costs also include having to take care of all of the notifications and planning to get the property abated. As mentioned earlier, it’s cheaper and easier if the property owner takes care of the property themselves. The Fire Department would prefer that they do not get involved because they would rather spend their time and effort on other programs.

How much is the property owner charged for the cost of the abatement?

On average, we predict that it will cost about \$1,500 to abate the property. Depending on the size of the property, it could be less, or it could be more.

How is the Property owner notified that they are being charged for abatement services?

The property owner will be sent an invoice for the services provided by the City. The property owner will be given a due date to pay the invoice. If the invoice is not paid before the due date, the City will contact the Monterey County Assessor and put a lean on the property. It is not the responsibility of the City to abate hazards on private property, but it is the responsibility of the City to ensure the safety of the citizens. Additionally, it is not the responsibility of other taxpayers to pay for the upkeep on another person's property. Therefore, the City will recover the cost of any and all abatement provided.

Wow this seems extreme, why is the City doing this?

The State of California has been experiencing fires of historic proportion over the past few years. Although we do not live in a Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) area, we are still susceptible to the negative effects of the dry weather and increased fire danger. A small grass fire can easily turn into a structure fire. Additionally, combustible garbage can also present hazards if it is ignited. The City does have the responsibility to protect their citizens and preventing unnecessary and dangerous fires is part of protecting the City.

I understand why this is important. Is there anything else I should know?

The City and the Fire Department do not want to take action against any property owner. In fact, we believe our time is better spent working on the goals our City Council has created for us. We prefer that property owners maintain their property without any involvement from us. We want property owners to understand that hazardous weed and refuse abatement is their responsibility and we only get involved when needed, to ensure the safety of our City. By taking care of your property, the City gets to spend their time on working on making our City better, and property owners save money by avoiding extra expenses caused by the City abating hazards on their property.