



Safety Element – Frequently Asked Questions

Marin County Housing & Safety Elements (2023-2031)

1. What is the Safety Element?

The safety element is one of the nine State-mandated elements of the general plan. State law requires a local government's safety element to address protection of its people from unreasonable risks associated with disasters, including earthquakes, floods, fires, and landslides. Other locally relevant safety issues, such as airport land use, emergency response, and hazardous materials spills may also be included. New state laws also require safety elements to address climate change resilience.

2. Where is the Safety Element located in the Countywide Plan?

Rather than being located in one place within the Countywide Plan, the Safety Element policies are integrated throughout the plan in The Natural Systems and Agriculture, The Built Environment, and The Socioeconomic Elements.

3. What types of safety issues are not addressed in the Safety Element?

The County's Safety Element does not address safety issues related to crime and policing, except in the context of disasters such as traffic safety during or following a disaster. Other Countywide Plan elements that address public safety, but are not part of the Safety Element, include the Housing Element, which details safety in relation to housing units; and the Air Quality Element and Noise Element, which deal with public and environmental health and welfare related to air pollutant emissions and environmental noise.

4. Why update the Safety Element?

New state laws require local governments to update their safety elements alongside their housing element updates and require them to include climate adaptation and resilience strategies in the update. California [Government Code Section 65302\(g\)](#) describes required background information and provides policy and program guidance for safety element updates.

5. How is the Safety Element currently implemented?

The current Safety Element as well as the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan is implemented by several County departments.

- The Office of Emergency Services (OES) is responsible for implementing those sections of the Safety Element that integrate portions of the Emergency Operations Plan.
- The Community Development Agency and the Department of Public Works are responsible for implementing the land use portions of the Safety Element.
- The Department of Building Services within the Community Development Agency administers and revises the Building Code to maximize the resilience of new and existing structures.

- Marin County Fire in coordination with Fire Safe Marin develops and implements regulations like mandated brush clearance.

The Safety Element update involves representatives from across these departments to help integrate programs from other plans and review policies for conformity with their programs and responsibilities.

6. What is the relationship between the Countywide Plan, Community Plans, and the Zoning Code?

The Countywide Plan provides the structure for all planning and land use activities in unincorporated Marin County. It articulates the County's vision and goals in the broadest terms. The County's 24 Community and Area Plans provide policy guidance specific to the needs and of each community. The Zoning Code translates the policies set in the Countywide Plan and Community Plans into specific rules and regulations, which are applied to every plot of land in unincorporated Marin County.

7. How does the Safety Element relate to the Housing Element?

The Safety Element must be consistent with other Countywide Plan Elements, including the Housing Element. The Safety Element lays the groundwork for countywide hazard planning and programming and identifies measure to minimize impacts of environmental hazards. When considering recommendations to meet the Marin's Housing Needs Allocation, measures to develop housing safely will be considered.

8. How is climate change and resilience being considered in the Safety Element update?

Consistent with state guidance on incorporating climate adaptation strategies and implementation measures into safety elements, Marin County is preparing a vulnerability assessment to determine public safety risks from climate change, including flooding, wildfire, drought, extreme heat, sea level rise, and storm activity.

9. Will the vulnerability assessment be available to the public?

Yes, the Vulnerability Assessment will be discussed during our public workshops and will be presented to the Board of Supervisors in December 2021.

10. How is the updated Safety Element considering wildfires?

The Community Development Agency is working closely with Marin County Fire, Fire Safe Marin, and the Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority (MWPA) to consolidate and integrate information from the new Marin Community Wildfire Protection Plan into the Safety Element. Additionally, the County has a new online tool, funded through the MWPA, that identifies evacuation routes for different zones within Marin County in real time. Information from this platform will be used to identify communities where evacuation routes are a problem.

11. What types of disasters are discussed in the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan?

The 2018 Local Hazard Mitigation Plan addresses the following hazards: adverse weather, dam failure, drought, earthquake, flood, landslide, tsunami, and wildland/urban interface fire. The Safety Element will be revised to clarify that the goals, policies, and objectives of the Safety Element pertain to this full list of hazards, as well as climate change resiliency issues such as drought, extreme heat, and severe weather events.

12. The documents below provide substantial information to inform the County's Safety Element update.

- [Marin County Multi-Jurisdictional Local Hazard Mitigation Plan](#)
- [BayWAVE Vulnerability Assessment](#)
- [C-SMART Vulnerability Assessment](#)
- [C-SMART Adaptation Report](#)
- [Land Use Adaptation Planning Guide](#)
- [Marin Community Wildfire Protection Plan](#)