



# General Plan Safety Element

## Public Workshop #4

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**Date:** 05 December 2023  
5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. PST

**Meeting at:** Microsoft Teams Meeting (see meeting information in the calendar invite)

**Project:** County of El Dorado General Plan Public Health, Safety, and Noise Element (“Safety Element”) Update – Draft Safety Element

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### Agenda Topics

#### 1. General Plan Overview

Ms. Thea Graybill introduced the County’s General Plan, the main document that guides the County’s long-term vision and goals for the future of the community. The General Plan was adopted in 2004 and has been amended several times since, most recently in 2019. The Plan covers various topics including land use, transportation, housing, environment, and public services, and provides policies and actions to implement them. Ms. Graybill explained that the planning team has reviewed the current status and progress of implementation and has identified the challenges and opportunities for future updates and revisions. The team agreed on some action items and recommendations for the next steps in the plan update process.

#### 2. County’s General Plan Elements

Ms. Graybill explained that the General Plan is made up of a collection of “elements,” or topic categories. State-mandated elements are land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, safety, air quality, and environmental justice (if disadvantaged communities are located within the local jurisdiction). However, other elements may be included that address issues of local concern.

The County has the following elements within its current General Plan:

- Agriculture and Forestry,
- Conservation and Open Space,
- Economic Development,
- Housing,
- Land Use,
- Parks and Recreation,
- Public Health, Safety, and Noise,
- Public Services and Utilities, and
- Transportation and Circulation.



### **3. Safety Element Overview**

Ms. Graybill explained that the County's Safety Element focuses on identifying and addressing health and safety concerns in unincorporated areas of the County, while aiming to establish a long-term framework for community growth, prioritizing hazard risk reduction and avoidance. In alignment with the State of California General Plan Guidelines, the overarching goal is to mitigate the potential risks associated with various hazards such as fires, floods, earthquakes, landslides, and climate change.

### **4. Safety Element Required Components**

Ms. Graybill summarized that State law dictates specific components that must be included, such as goals, policies, and an implementation program. She stated the County is required to incorporate hazard information and mapping and address risks from seismic activity, tsunamis, dam failures, slope instability leading to mudslides, flooding, wildland and urban fires, and climate change adaptation and resilience.

### **5. Public Outreach and Engagement**

Ms. Melissa Baum initiated a multiple-choice Slido poll, asking "How can we improve community awareness for preparedness of natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, or wildfires?" The responses are as follows:

With two votes:

- Collaborating with local media for public awareness campaigns
- Conducting regular community drills and exercises
- Establishing a community emergency alert system
- Hosting workshops and seminars on disaster preparedness
- Implementing signage and information boards in high-risk areas
- Utilizing social media and other digital platforms for information dissemination

With one vote:

- Distributing educational materials through local schools and community centers
- Other (please specify) – One participant shared that improved awareness could stem from improved communications between federal, state, and local agencies.

A participant asked, "Does environmental justice apply to El Dorado County, in full or in part? If in part, which parts?" Ms. Juliana Prosperi replied that there are not disadvantaged communities in the County per the definition of SB 1000, but that the policy statements in the Safety Element does consider disenfranchised communities, frontline workers, and other sensitive populations who may be more vulnerable to the effects of climate change.



The participant continued, "How great are seismic threats to the County?" Ms. Prosperi shared that seismic threats are a required component of all California Safety Elements, and as such, complete mapping of potential ground shaking and regional fault lines in the County are included in the draft. She added that California has potential seismic risk, but explained that State requirements and local zoning regulations keep development set back from these areas, which can minimize imminent risk from this hazard.

The participant continued, "Is El Dorado County considering an evacuation program like Zone Haven?" Deputy Fire Chief Lilienthal from the County Sheriff's Department and Office of Emergency Services (OES) responded that the County has selected a vendor (Perimeter) to develop an evacuation zone concept similar to Zone Haven.

Ms. Baum continued with a brief summation of the Safety Element Outreach Strategy. First, a dedicated website was developed, serving as a repository for background information, the Climate Vulnerability Assessment (CVA), Draft Safety Element updates, resources, and opportunities for public involvement and feedback. The second touchpoint involved a bilingual public survey circulated at the end of the previous year, garnering input from over 815 respondents on climate change and safety element topics. The third aspect featured the establishment of a Safety Element Advisory Committee (SEAC) comprised of various County departments and external agencies that provided feedback on policy implications and specific input on new policy statements. Lastly, the County utilized social media channels like Facebook for public notices, press releases, and updates on stakeholder events, workshops, and the availability of the Public Review CVA and Safety Element document. This comprehensive outreach strategy aimed to ensure broad participation and input from diverse stakeholders throughout the update process.

## **6. Changes to State Law**

Ms. Baum explained that the County is undertaking the update of the Safety Element for several reasons. The primary reason stems from the need to comply with recent amendments to California Government Code Section 65302(g) Sections 1-4. Triggered by the escalating frequency and severity of natural disasters in California over the past decade, these legislative changes, influenced by Senate Bills and Assembly Bills, mandate specific requirements in the Safety Element. These include addressing increasing wildfire hazards, climate vulnerability, adaptation strategies, evacuation routes, and related hazards. This update aligns the Safety Element with current legislative mandates, ensuring a proactive and comprehensive approach to community safety and disaster resilience.



## 7. Summary of Revisions

Ms. Baum summarized the required revisions to the new Draft Safety Element. First, it was updated to ensure the County's compliance with current statutory requirements. Second, the update incorporates recently completed assessments, such as the CVA and the Background Information Report in the Public Review Draft Safety Element's Appendices, providing an updated understanding of existing conditions. Through the CVA, input from advisory groups like the SEAC, stakeholders, and the public has identified County issues, challenges, and opportunities, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of hazards influenced by climate and vulnerabilities of County assets to climate change and social equity parameters. The update revisits guiding principles for public health and safety and introduces a new framework for climate adaptation strategies and policies.

Next, Ms. Prosperi reviewed the requirements from Government Code 65302(g).

- 65302(g)(1) requires the Safety Element to consider geologic and seismic hazards, encompassing phenomena like seismically induced surface rupture, ground shaking, ground failure, and liquefaction.
  - A participant shared "I think that fires and floods are more important to EDC than earthquakes and look forward to hearing about that."
- 65302(g)(2) focuses on hazards related to water, including flooding and dam incidents that could lead to flood inundation, seiches in Lake Tahoe, and various slope instabilities, all of which pose potential risks to our communities.
  - A participant asked "Are all Dam Inundation Maps in the County up to date? And Dam Inundation Plans? Specifically for private dams."
- 65302(g)(4) necessitate the consideration of climate change vulnerabilities and the integration of a comprehensive climate adaptation framework, inclusive of policies and resilience strategies, into the Safety Element.
- 65302(g)(3) addresses the significant threat posed by wildland and urban fires, prioritizing the development of evacuation zones, routes, and accessibility plans.

Ms. Prosperi addressed the questions and indicated that several of the high hazard dams in the County have Emergency Response Plans in place. Ms. Prosperi then initiated a Slido poll, asking "What steps can be taken to reduce the risk of wildfires in our community, and how can residents contribute to these efforts?" Responses are as follows:

- Utilities like AT&T should take greater responsibility for trimming trees from their lines. I have seen a branch literally on a communications line in Garden Valley.



- The elected officials and agencies need to stop trying to minimize the wildfire risk and implement the necessary changes to safeguard our existing infrastructure and communities.

## **8. Plan Integration**

Ms. Prosperi noted that the Safety Element's importance lies in its integration with existing plans, forming a comprehensive strategy to reduce long-term risks. Integration involves incorporating safety principles into community plans, fostering co-benefits, and enhancing resilience. The General Plan serves as the guiding blueprint, with elements like the Housing Element and the updating Public Health, Safety, and Noise Element. These form the basis for detailed plans like the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP), currently being updated. LHMPs are crucial for disaster assistance eligibility, featuring risk assessments and mitigation strategies. The County also maintains Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) for wildfire risk reduction. Additionally, the Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) outlines short-term strategies for coordinating response efforts. In summary, the General Plan establishes long-term principles, while additional plans, including LHMPs, CWPPs, and the EOP, provide specific hazard responses, creating a resilient framework for various risks.

## **9. New Policies and Implementation Measures**

Ms. Prosperi explained the Public Draft Safety Element encompasses a comprehensive set of health and safety policies, primarily driven by State mandates, requirements from the California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, and insights from the California Geological Survey. In response to these directives, the Public Draft introduces numerous new policies, particularly for fire safety, evacuation accessibility, and climate adaptation goals.

The fire hazard section of the draft Safety Element has undergone substantial changes, with three revised policies and 16 new wildfire policies, including a subsection focusing on interagency cooperation. These adjustments were refined through input from the SEAC work sessions.

The Safety Element addresses geologic and seismic hazards, featuring six existing and eight new policies, emphasizing building site standards compliance and the addition of a policy concerning lake seiches. A new flood policy focuses on dam inundation coordination with various entities. Another section introduces eight policies related to evacuation routes. Additionally, five policies center around preventative public health services, recognizing the interplay between natural hazards and public health.

To meet climate adaptation framework requirements, the Safety Element integrates seven climate adaptation policies, ten drought and water supply policies, four agricultural and forestry



pest disease policies, five extreme heat policies, four high wind policies, and three policies addressing severe weather hazards. Ms. Prosperi explained that the organization of these policies aligns with the County's LHMP. In total, 33 adaptation policies aim to address climate vulnerabilities, allowing flexibility for the County to prioritize based on the severity of hazard risks, fiscal considerations, and funding opportunities for wildfire prevention and climate adaptation.

Ms. Prosperi initiated the third and final Slido poll for the evening, asking "How can we make sure that development benefits everyone in the community fairly? Are there specific groups or neighborhoods that might need extra attention or resources?" Responses are as follows:

- New developments should pay their fair share for the cost of infrastructure improvements and ensure that they comply fully with the County's policies in place within the Safety Element and General Plan.
- Georgetown, Mosquito, all the uphill communities that have fewer resources.

## 10. Next Steps

Ms. Prosperi then shared a schedule of upcoming events, emphasizing that the deadline for public comment on the Public Draft Safety Element Update had been extended to **Friday, January 5<sup>th</sup>**.

One participant asked where the appendices to the Safety Element could be found and suggested reorganizing the layout of the County website to make it easier to navigate. Ms. Graybill shared that the Public Draft Safety Element Update and all appendices can be found under the "Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission Meeting" tab on the County's Safety Element Update website,

<https://www.edcgov.us/Government/longrangeplanning/Pages/General-Plan-Safety-Element-Update.aspx>.

One participant asked what changed most significantly while updating the Safety Element. Ms. Prosperi answered that the majority of new regulations, and therefore changes to the Safety Element, were applicable to the fire hazards sections. She noted that additional information has been added addressing hazards posed by climate change.

Following up, the participant asked if there was a place to see what comments had already been provided on the Safety Element Update. Ms. Graybill responded that staff may provide a list of comments on the Public Draft when the Update is proposed for adoption by the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.

The meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m.