



Disaster and Fire Safety Commission

CONSENT CALENDAR
September 13, 2022

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
 From: Disaster and Fire Safety Commission
 Submitted by: Jose Luis Bedolla, Chairperson, Disaster and Fire Safety Commission
 Subject: Red Curbs and Visible Signage

RECOMMENDATION

The Disaster and Fire Safety Commission (“Commission” or “DFSC”) respectfully requests that Council immediately take the following remedial actions to improve emergency vehicle access and residents’ ability to evacuate in the event of a wildfire, while we await implementation of more comprehensive long-term actions such as the Safe Passages program.

In identified high fire risk areas (Fire Zones 2 and 3) and in other high-risk areas, such as where hazardous chemicals are stored or used:

1. Inspect, fix or replace all parking restriction signage as necessary;
2. Red curb all fire hydrant areas to the maximum extent allowed by law; and
3. Direct the Fire Department and Public Works to identify areas that could be pinch points for fire trucks to travel.

It is important that residents understand parking restrictions in the City and State Vehicle Codes. The City should lessen any confusion that might be caused by poorly maintained, misplaced or unclear signs or curbs. The simple step of a periodic inspection of existing parking visual cues (signage, red curbs, etc.) has a profound impact on the safety of all Berkeley residents at any time, but at this time, this effect is enhanced enormously when we are experiencing wildfire conditions tied to severe drought. This proposed periodic review is something that needs to be done and that can be done easily and quickly to reduce the increasing stress residents feel about fire danger and evacuation routes.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

The Commission is not privy to the budget or plans from Public Works Department and other departments, however, given the increasing fire danger, we ask that completion of this initiative be a priority. Use of Measure FF funds should be considered if necessary to expedite implementation of this initiative for the 2022 fire season.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

On June 22, the commission passed a motion to recommend remedial actions to improve emergency vehicle access and residents' ability to evacuate in the event of an emergency.

Motion: Dean, second: Bradstreet, Vote: 8 Ayes: Bedolla, Dean, Bradstreet, Cutler, Simmons, Degenkolb, Rader, Stein; 0 Noes; 0 Absent;; 0 Abstain:

BACKGROUND

Signage in the Berkeley hills in particular is in various states of disrepair. Without clear signage, in these and other high-risk areas of the City, residents and visitors tend to ignore signage and park in prohibited areas. Parking in restricted areas could result in blocking fire trucks' ability to get to an emergency and could prevent residents from egress in the event of wildfire. While there is existing law that governs parking near hydrants regardless of red curbing, that tends to be ignored.

As such, red curbing to the maximum distance around hydrants to the extent allowed by law will serve as a reminder of the parking restriction and allow for the fire department to access hydrants in case of fire. Lastly, we ask for further interdepartmental discussions around identifying pinch points for fire trucks where red curbing those pinch points would allow for fire truck access in case of emergencies. In cases where there is no sidewalk, the edge of the asphalt could be painted to serve the same purpose.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE IMPACTS

There is no direct environmental impact of this recommendation.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

The rationale is to improve emergency vehicle ingress during common emergencies and in the event of wildfire, and to improve emergency public egress in case of wildfire while we await a larger discussion around the Safe Passages program.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

There is no alternative to improving existing signage and red-curbing around fire hydrants other than delayed or no action. Not red curbing the areas around the fire hydrants and focusing on parking enforcement is another possible approach but would require substantially increased parking enforcement.

CITY MANAGER

The City Manager concurs with the content and recommendations of the Commission's Report. The Fire Department has already begun to address replacement of all existing "No Parking" signs that have faded and the repainting of all existing Red Curbs in Fire Zones 1, 2, and 3.

Funding has been allocated within Measure FF to initiate this project. The Fire Department will evaluate what the one-time fees will be to update the painting of curbs, replacement of signs, and then analyze continual maintenance costs.

The Safe Passages Project is aimed at mitigation of wildfire risks by supporting Berkeley's Emergency Evacuation Plan and helping to keep emergency ingress and egress routes accessible.

CONTACT PERSON

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