

TRAVIS COUNTY EMERGENCY SERVICES DISTRICT NO. 9
RESOLUTION NO. 2025-06

RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE FINDINGS OF FACT INTENDED TO DECLARE THE WILDLAND-URBAN INTERFACE AREAS WITHIN TRAVIS COUNTY EMERGENCY SERVICES DISTRICT NO. 9

WHEREAS, On April 14th, 1961, a large fire started by a motorist traveling along St. Stephen's School Road on the western boundary of the Roy Ranch carelessly tossed a lit cigarette out the window and ignited a grass fire. The fire burned southward, leaping from one old brush pile to another and fed on dried vegetation in canyons and ravines. More than two hundred students from The University of Texas and St. Edwards University volunteered to fight the fire. An intensive two-day community effort stopped the fire short of Bee Creek. Following the fire event, Travis County Rural Fire District No. 1 was created under a new State Law. In 1995, residents voted to form Travis County Emergency Services District No. 9; and

WHEREAS, Travis County Emergency Services District No. 9 ("ESD") is charged with the responsibility to promote the health, safety and general welfare of the community by preventing death, injuries and property damage from fires within the ESD boundaries; and

WHEREAS, the ESD Fire Code only applies to the unincorporated portion of Travis County Emergency Services District No. 9 and does not include the City of West Lake Hills, City of Rollingwood, and the City of Austin Limited Purpose Jurisdiction; and

WHEREAS, the territory of Travis County Emergency Services District No. 9 is as formally established and recorded by Travis County Commissioners Court orders and public election, and the Findings of Fact and WUI boundaries herein apply specifically to the unincorporated areas within that established jurisdiction; and

WHEREAS, the wildland-urban Interface, where urban and suburban development abuts wildland vegetation such as forests, shrubs, and grasslands, provides the most significant challenge in wildfire protection and preparedness efforts and is often the source of human-caused fires. Our community continues to grow and will continue to push into the undeveloped wildland-urban Interface areas, putting more structures and lives at risk from wildfire; and

WHEREAS, Central Texas experiences periodic brief or long-term droughts, which are a significant contributing factor to potentially large and damaging fires. Travis County ESD 9 is subject to extended periods of high temperatures, low humidity, and frequent drought conditions during the summer and fall months. These conditions significantly increase the risk of ignition and fire spread in vegetated areas throughout the district; and

WHEREAS, ESD 9 includes steep hills, ridgelines, and canyon areas, which allow faster fire spread by channeling winds and preheating flammable materials upslope. These topographic features can exacerbate fire behavior, hinder fire suppression access, and delay evacuation; and

WHEREAS, the District is bordered and interspersed with extensive wildland vegetation, particularly within the canyonlands, preserves, and other undeveloped parcels. Residential and commercial structures often exist in close proximity to heavily wooded areas, increasing exposure to ember cast, flame contact, and radiant heat; and

WHEREAS, neighborhoods within ESD 9 are accessed via narrow, winding roads with limited ingress/egress routes. Emergency response and evacuation during wildfires may be delayed, increasing the need for ignition resistance; and

WHEREAS, Large fires between 500 and 4,000-plus acres have occurred in parts of Travis County during the years 1959, 1961, 1962, 1968, 1989, 1993, 1994, and 2011. The fires of 2011, at the peak of a multi-year drought, destroyed many structures in Austin, Travis County, and Bastrop County. However, the Pinnacle fire in April of 2011, which covered 100 acres and destroyed 10 homes, showed that smaller fires can also be destructive; and

WHEREAS, Past wildfire incidents show that structure ignitions occur from blowing embers as well as direct heat. Due to this fact, the Wildland-Urban Interface areas for the ESD should include developed and developable properties with risk factors tied to vegetation fuel type, slope, and critical fire weather frequency; and

WHEREAS, during times of high fire activity, it is common to have multiple fires starting and burning simultaneously. As experienced during the fires of September 2011, firefighting resources are limited and will be stretched responding to multiple incidents. Fires involving multiple structures will have a significant community impact and further challenge firefighting resources. Ignition-resistant construction and maintenance of defensible space would reduce the severity of fires, thereby reducing the impact to the community, and improving conditions for fire response; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners of Travis County Emergency Services District No. 9 ("Board") finds that local climate, topography, and wildland fuels within the ESD are conducive to wildfires that may result in serious bodily injury, death, property damage, and disrupt services; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners of Travis County Emergency Services District No. 9 amended the ESD Fire Code to include the adoption of the International Wildland-Urban Interface Code on January 22nd, 2013 for the purpose of regulating and governing the mitigation of hazard to life and property from the intrusion of fire from wildland exposures, fire from adjacent structures, and prevention of structure fires from spreading to wildland fuels; and

WHEREAS, Section 302 of the International Wildland-Urban Interface Code requires the governing body to declare the wildland-urban interface areas within the jurisdiction based on the findings of fact; and

WHEREAS, Section 302 of the International Wildland-Urban Interface Code requires the fire code official to reevaluate and recommend modification to the wildland-urban interface areas on a 3-year basis or more frequently as deemed necessary by the governing body; and

WHEREAS, the wildland-urban interface area boundary established by this Resolution corresponds to natural and man-made features, including ridgelines, canyon edges, major roadways, and subdivision boundaries within ESD 9, thereby ensuring clarity and compliance with Section 302.1 of the 2021 IWUIC; and

WHEREAS, the neighborhood of Lost Creek was originally served by Travis County Emergency Services District No. 9 (ESD 9) before its annexation by the City of Austin in 2015, during which time ESD 9's fire protection and prevention responsibilities over the area were suspended; and

WHEREAS, following a public election and official actions in 2024, the Lost Creek neighborhood was formally released from the City of Austin and returned to the jurisdiction of ESD 9, thereby restoring ESD 9's full fire code enforcement and wildland fire protection authority over the area; and

WHEREAS, as a result of this jurisdictional realignment, Lost Creek is now fully subject to the provisions of the 2021 International Wildland-Urban Interface Code as adopted by ESD 9 via Order No. 2013-01, including the application of updated wildland-urban interface boundaries and ignition-resistant construction class designations (Class I, II, or III) established by this Findings of Fact and the associated WUI map; and

WHEREAS, the National Weather Service and historical fire-weather records indicate that Travis County, including the territory of ESD 9, experiences more than eight (8) days per year on average of critical fire weather conditions, defined by high temperatures, sustained winds, and low relative humidity. This frequency places the District within the highest fire weather category under Table 502.1 of the 2021 International Wildland-Urban Interface Code, thereby requiring that most structures located within the WUI be assigned to Class I (Extreme) or Class II (High) ignition-resistant construction categories to adequately mitigate ignition risk; and

WHEREAS, vegetation assessments consistent with Appendix D of the 2021 IWUIC identify that the District is predominantly characterized by medium and heavy fuel types, including Ashe Juniper (cedar), live oak, and mixed hardwood stands on steep terrain. Light fuels are limited to managed grass fields and rights-of-way. Accordingly, the majority of parcels in ESD 9 fall into Medium or Heavy Fuel Models, which, when combined with frequent critical fire weather conditions, result in Class I (Extreme) ignition-resistant construction requirements under Table 502.1, with Class II applying in limited cases.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Commissioners of Travis County Emergency Services District No. 9, that it hereby adopts the following findings of fact:

SECTION 1 - FINDINGS OF FACT – Wildland-Urban Interface Conditions

The foregoing recitals are incorporated into this Resolution by reference as findings of fact as if expressly set forth herein.

The Travis County Emergency Services District No. 9 hereby makes the following findings: the local fire environment, community values, limited resources, and land development in the Wildland-Urban Interface areas of Travis County Emergency Services District No. 9 are features that can, under certain circumstances, impact emergency services. These features support the previous amendment to the ESD Fire Code in 2013 to include the adoption of the International Wildland-Urban Interface Code, promulgated by the International Code Council, and its continued enforcement, and designating certain areas of the ESD as "wildland-urban interface areas" with the goal to mitigate, to the extent possible, the impact of those features. Mitigating risk within the wildland-urban interface areas is essential to protecting our community. More specifically, the Board of Commissioners of Travis County Emergency Services District No. 9 finds that:

1. Conditions in the local fire environment support the implementation of fire protection requirements as set forth in the Wildland-Urban Interface Code.
2. Land development in the wildland-urban interface further supports the implementation of fire protection requirements as set forth in the Wildland-Urban Interface Code.
3. Reducing the risk of structure ignition and infrastructure impact during times of limited resources further supports the implementation of fire protection requirements as set forth in the Wildland-Urban Interface Code.
4. The frequency of critical fire weather days (≥ 8 annually), combined with steep topography and the prevalence of medium and heavy wildland fuels, results in most properties within ESD 9 being subject to Class I (Extreme) or Class II (High) ignition-resistant construction under IWUIC Table 502.1.
5. Vegetation within the District, as identified under Appendix D of the 2021 IWUIC, is predominantly Medium and Heavy Fuel Models, which drive the classification of hazard severity and further support the requirement for Class I ignition-resistant construction as the prevailing standard.

SECTION 2 – DECLARATION OF WUI PROXIMITY ZONES AND IGNITION RESISTANCE CLASSIFICATIONS

ESD 9 hereby designates all developed and developable properties within its jurisdiction, excluding those within the limited purpose jurisdiction of the City of Austin and incorporated cities of Rollingwood and West Lake Hills, as being located within the Wildland-Urban Interface as defined by Section 202 of the 2021 IWUIC.

Ignition-resistant construction requirements shall be determined using IWUIC Table 502.1 (Fire Hazard Severity), which classifies hazards based on:

- Critical fire weather frequency (≥ 8 days annually within ESD 9),
- Predominant vegetation fuel type (light, medium, or heavy fuels, per Appendix D), and
- Slope (%) adjacent to the building site.

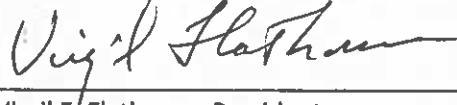
Based on the findings, the majority of structures in ESD 9 fall into Class I or Class II, which are considered ignition-resistant constructions. Class III construction applies only in limited circumstances where light fuels and gentler slopes coincide.

The Wildland-Urban Interface Map adopted concurrently with this Resolution, identified as "Exhibit A," illustrates the boundaries of the ESD 9 WUI jurisdiction, which correspond to natural and man-made features for ease of identification and enforcement.

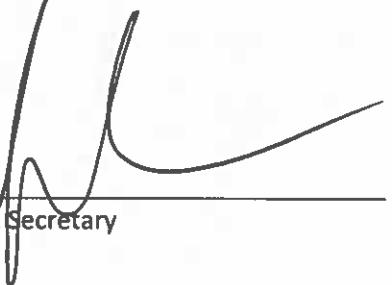
APPLICABILITY:

All properties located within the boundaries of Travis County ESD No. 9, excluding those within the limited purpose jurisdiction of the City of Austin and incorporated cities of Rollingwood and West Lake Hills, shall comply with the ignition-resistant construction requirements assigned under IWUIC Table 502.1, as specified in the 2021 IWUIC.

PASSED AND APPROVED at a meeting held on 25th day of November, 2025 at which a quorum of Commissioners was present.


Virgil E. Flathouse
Virgil E. Flathouse, President

ATTEST:


Steve Hudson, Secretary



ESD 9 Territory

October 2025

Inside WUI Code Area

ESD 9 WUI Code Area

ESD 9 Territory

Fire Station

Outside WUI Code Area

Outside ESD 9

Austin Limited Purpose



Municipalities

(West Lake Hills
& Rollingwood)

