Chapter 9: Safety and Emergency Preparedness Element

Introduction

In Atascadero, residents, business owners, and visitors experience low crime rates and benefit from efficient police, fire, and emergency medical services. City leaders and staff work hard to maintain a safe community. However, the threat of wildfires, flooding, hazardous materials, seismic and geological hazards, and noise require constant attention to guard against risks to life and property. Community safety planning reduces risk and creates resilient neighborhoods. This element establishes goals, policies, and actions that are designed to safeguard the community, provide for sound emergency preparedness planning, and build in resilience.

Safety and Emergency Preparedness Priorities

To help plan for, respond to, and recover from natural and human-caused disasters, this General Plan addresses the following safety and emergency preparedness issues.

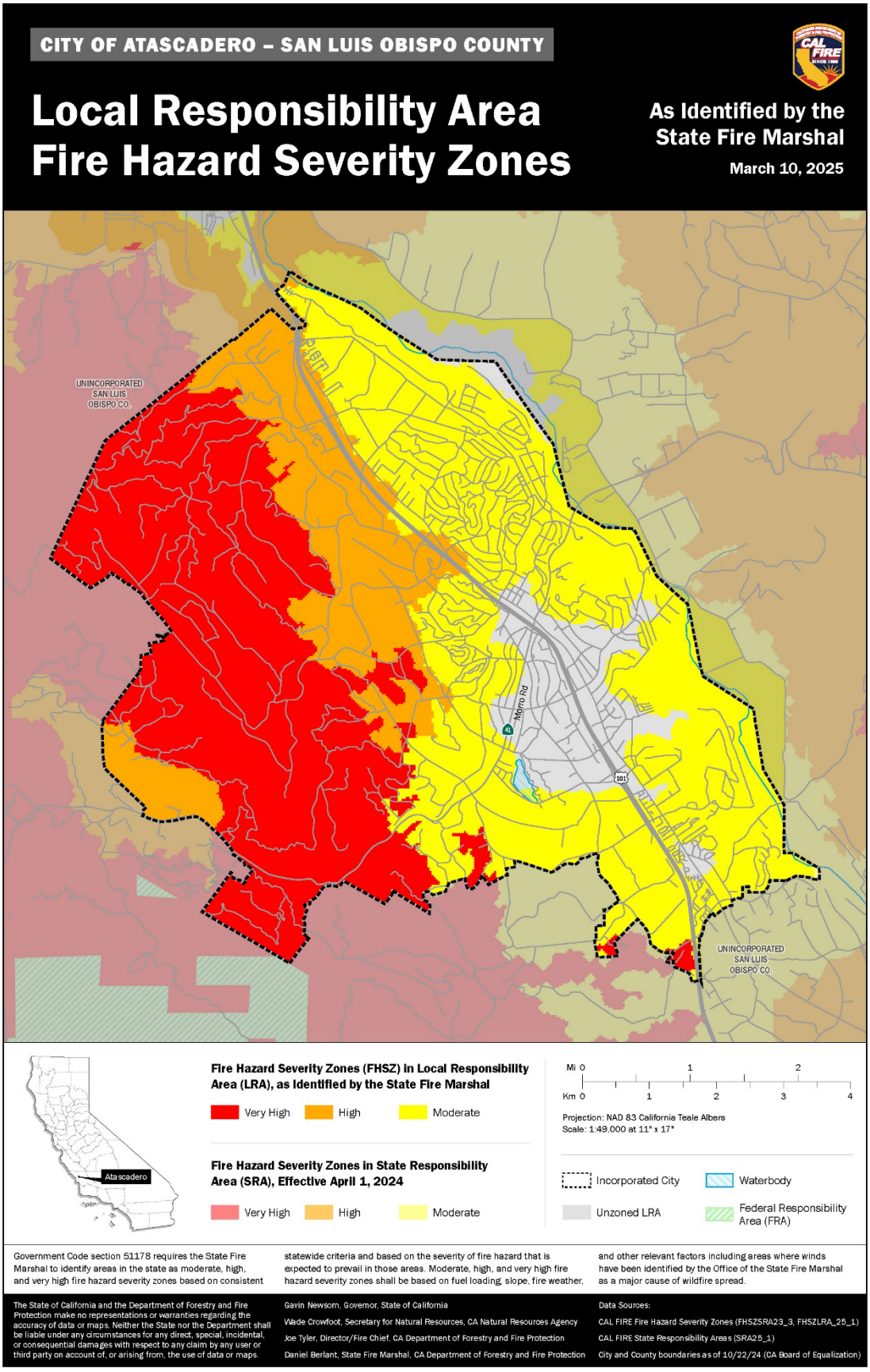
Wildfires

Atascadero has a considerable wildfire risk, with approximately half of the community included within a Very High or High Fire Hazard Severity Zone, as designated by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire). The region has suffered from high-fire risk, experiencing several large-scale wildfires recorded between 1985-2025. Additional information about the history of significant wildfires and the potential for future events can be found in the latest Local Hazards Mitigation Plan and online with the California Department of Forestry.

Responsibility for fire protective services in the region falls under several agencies. On the local level, the Atascadero Fire Department is a City-funded department that oversees emergency fire response within City limits. Cal Fire is responsible for protecting natural resources from fire on land designated by the State Board of Forestry as State Responsibility Area, which includes most land directly outside of Atascadero's boundary. Cal Fire has a Mutual Threat Zone (where wildfires pose a shared threat to multiple jurisdictions) within City boundaries and provides a full wildland response. The United States Department of Forestry is responsible for fire protective services on Federally owned land, such as national forests and parks. Nearby Federal land includes Los Padres National Forest, which abuts Eacle Ranch and is located about 10 miles to the west of the City boundary.

Reducing the potential for loss of life and property in the event of a fire requires providing infrastructure that supports rapid response and reducing flammable materials that fuel wildland fires. Necessary infrastructure includes sufficient evacuation routes, adequate water supply and pressure (managed by the Atascadero Mutual Water Company), and strategic placement of new water tanks/reservoirs. Having more compact development pattern and requiring defensible space in areas at risk for wildfires can also help better protect new residents and businesses.

The City has adopted the 2025 State Fire Hazard Severity Zones Map (shown on the following page). Based on local conditions and known fire risks, the City may elect to adopt a more stringent map to address building and fire code requirements for future developments. The City has established clear building and defensible space standards in these areas to reduce wildfire risk. The City has identified fire prevention, mitigation, response, and recovery programs to help make fire prone areas more resilient to the wildfire threat.


CITY OF ATASCADERO – SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY
Local Responsibility Area
Fire Hazard Severity Zones
As Identified by the
State Fire Marshal
March 10, 2025
UNINCORPORATED
SAN LUIS
OBISPO CO.
Morro Rd
41
101
UNINCORPORATED
SAN LUIS
OBISPO CO.
Atascadero
Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZ) in Local Responsibility Area (LRA), as Identified by the State Fire Marshal
Very High
High
Moderate
Fire Hazard Severity Zones in State Responsibility Area (SRA), Effective April 1, 2024
Very High
High
Moderate
Mi 0 1 2
Km 0 1 2 3 4
Projection: NAD 83 California Teale Albers
Scale: 1:49,000 at 11" x 17"
Incorporated City
Waterbody
Unzoned LRA
Federal Responsibility Area (FRA)
Government Code section 51178 requires the State Fire Marshal to identify areas in the state as moderate, high, and very high fire hazard severity zones based on consistent statewide criteria and based on the severity of fire hazard that is expected to prevail in those areas. Moderate, high, and very high fire hazard severity zones shall be based on fuel loading, slope, fire weather, and other relevant factors including areas where winds have been identified by the Office of the State Fire Marshal as a major cause of wildfire spread.
The State of California and the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection make no representations or warranties regarding the accuracy of data or maps. Neither the State nor the Department shall be liable under any circumstances for any direct, special, incidental, or consequential damages with respect to any claim by any user or third party on account of, or arising from, the use of data or maps.
Gavin Newsom, Governor, State of California
Wade Crowfoot, Secretary for Natural Resources, CA Natural Resources Agency
Joe Tyler, Director/Fire Chief, CA Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
Daniel Berlant, State Fire Marshal, CA Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
Data Sources:
CAL FIRE Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZSRA23_3, FHSZLRA_25_1)
CAL FIRE State Responsibility Areas (SRA25_1)
City and County boundaries as of 10/22/24 (CA Board of Equalization)

Flooding

Areas along Atascadero Creek, Graves Creek, Paloma Creek, and the Salinas River have the potential to flood and are identified as 100-year flood zones by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Some properties fall within high-risk areas, known as Special Flood Zone Areas. These areas—largely located adjacent to the creeks and the Salinas river—have at least a one percent annual chance of flooding. If a property owner has a Federally backed loan within these areas, Federal regulations dictate that the owner maintain flood insurance. Even outside of these FEMA-designated zones, smaller drainage channels and culverts can become clogged or fail, creating the threat of localized flooding.

Flood-prone areas along Atascadero Creek could provide multi-benefit functions such as passive park space, places to recharge the groundwater basin, and areas to naturally filter urban run-off pollutants. However, because Atascadero Creek and other creeks transverse private property, creating dual public benefit uses presents challenges.

Hazardous Materials

Simply defined, a hazardous material is any item or agent (biological, chemical, physical) that has the potential to cause harm to humans, animals, or the environment, either by itself or through interaction with other factors. We encounter hazardous materials as part of our everyday lives: batteries, light bulbs, and household chemicals such as pesticides, motor oil, cleaners, and paints. The many electrical devices we use contain materials that become “e-waste” when those devices fail or become obsolete. Almost all commercial and industrial businesses utilize or produce hazardous materials as part of their processes.

The use, storage, and disposal of hazardous materials—including management of contaminated soils and groundwater—are regulated by a myriad of Federal, State, and local laws. In Atascadero, the Fire Department has responsibility to ensure businesses properly store hazardous materials to avoid accidental release and to allow firefighters to respond appropriately if upset occurs. The San Luis Obispo Environmental Health Services Division oversees reporting and inspections.

Seismic and Geologic Hazards

California sits atop the Pacific Plate, a piece of Earth’s crust that extends from Japan and Indonesian to the western U.S., and from Alaska south past Hawaii. The earthquakes we experience locally result from the grinding and shifting of the plate along a myriad of fault lines, some close by and others quite some distance away. For example, during the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake that significantly shook the Bay Area and downed part of the Bay Bridge, Atascadero residents experienced light shaking.

The fault zones closest to Atascadero are the Rinconada and the Nacimiento faults. According to the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), the Rinconada fault is considered active, with the potential to generate a maximum 7.5 magnitude earthquake. An earthquake of this scale would produce significant ground shaking and could trigger the seismic-related effects including landslides (see **Figure 9-3**) and liquefaction (see **Figure 9-4**). The degree of hazard depends on the location of the

seismic epicenter, the magnitude and duration of ground shaking, topography, groundwater conditions, and type of building construction. The Nacimiento fault is considered inactive. Of regional significance is the San Andreas fault, which extends from San Francisco Bay through central California to the Gulf of California. A major earthquake along the San Andreas fault would have the potential to result significant ground shaking and, depending upon the location of the earthquake, cause catastrophic damage. **Table 9-1** identifies fault zones in the vicinity of the Planning Area.

Table 9-1: Nearby Fault Zones and Ground Shaking Potential

Fault Zone	**Distance** (from El Camino Real/Traffic Way)	**Maximum Credible Earthquake**	**Maximum Probable Earthquake**	**Anticipated Acceleration Range** (in gravity, or g)
Rinconada and Jolon	2	7.5	7.0	0.40 – 0.6
Black Mountain	3	7.5	5.75	0.1
La Panza	9	7.5	Unknown, but 5 assumed	0.1 – 0.4
Los Osos	14	7	Unknown, but 5 assumed	0.1 – 0.2
Hosgri	22	7.5	6.5 – 7.5	0.1 – 0.2
San Andreas	27	8.25	8	0.1 – 0.2
San Simeon	35	Unknown	6.5	Unknown

Noise

Noise typically is defined as unwanted sound. Exposure to excessive noise can impact the health and quality of life of people who reside in, work in, or visit Atascadero. While people may not agree as to what constitutes particularly irksome noise, science does show that certain defined noise levels can cause ill health effects. Excessive noise can cause hearing loss, stress, hypertension, sleep disturbance, and fatigue. Noise sources within the City include:

- Roadways and freeways are the primary noise sources in the City of Atascadero. Primary transportation noise sources include vehicular traffic along US-101 and SR-41.
- Freight and Amtrak train traffic along the Union Pacific Railroad corridor result in localized and intermittent noise events.
- Non-transportation-related noise sources are predominantly associated with industrial and commercial operations and building mechanical equipment. Other noise sources can result in intermittent increases in ambient noise levels, such as short-term construction activities, as well as school and events.

Police Services

The Atascadero Police Department prides itself in safeguarding the community. Part of its stated mission is "to work toward being the premier law enforcement agency on the central coast." The Federal Department of Justice reports the rate of crime in Atascadero to be 23.73 per 1,000 residents during a standard year. The most frequent crimes are drug crimes (5.6 percent), vandalism (5.4 percent), vehicle theft (3.4 percent), theft (2.8 percent), and assault (1.6 percent). While Atascadero is a relatively safe community, the realities and perceptions around crime affect how current and prospective residents and business owners view the community.

New Public Safety Facilities

The City's Police and Fire Departments have identified needs for critical upgrades to existing facilities. Fire Station #1 will be rebuilt at its existing site and will include an Emergency Operations Center. Fire Station #2 will have a complete renovation of the living quarters. The Police Department will include major renovations and a new dispatch building. All three projects are expected to be completed in 2027. The Fire Department also envisions a third fire station in the 101/Del Rio region to ensure appropriate response times throughout the City. While capital projects are expensive and require consideration to the cost of additional staff, the one-time expense often helps improve efficiencies and reduce other operations and maintenance expenses.

Relationship to the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan

Under the provisions of the Federal Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 and California Government Code Sections 8685.9 and 65302.6, local governments can adopt a local hazard mitigation plan into their safety element. If a community has not done so, the State will only reimburse the community up to 75 percent of eligible costs associated with emergency response and recovery from a specific situation. Communities with a hazard mitigation plan incorporated into their safety element may receive more than 75 percent of eligible costs from the State.

The City of Atascadero coordinates with San Luis Obispo County on preparation of a Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan, which comprehensively addresses mitigation planning for all seven cities plus unincorporated County areas. Originally adopted in 2020, the County updates the regional plan every five years to respond to emerging issues. The Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan is incorporated by reference into this Safety and Emergency Preparedness Element.

Safety and Emergency Preparedness Goals, Policies, and Actions

The following sections include goal sections, with supporting policies and implementation actions, related to the following topics:

- Wildfire Risks
- Flooding
- Hazardous Materials
- Seismic and Geological Hazards
- Noise
- Emergency Preparedness and Response
- Police Protection
- Fire Protection Services and Emergency Medical Response

Wildfire Risks

Wildfires are major concerns of many municipalities. Like most communities in San Luis Obispo County, Atascadero faces the potential of catastrophic fires even with well-planned risk reduction (see **Figure 9-1**). These goals, policies, and actions focus on strategies the City, property owners, and partner agencies will undertake to reduce the threat of all types of wildfires.

Goal SEP-1: A high level of protection from and minimized risk to life in the event of a fire

Policy SEP-1.1: New Development Risk Reduction. Promote new development in areas of the community that have lower risk of wildfire hazards and ensure new development in higher risk areas are consistent with Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) standards.

Action A: Encourage the clustering of lots in higher fire hazard areas surrounded by defensible open space to minimize fire risk to new rural development.

Action B: Coordinate Fire Department and Atascadero Mutual Water Company review of subdivision design to ensure adequate fire flows.

Action C: Review new development to ensure adequate access for emergency vehicles and compliance with Fire and Building Codes.

Action D: Monitor and update the Municipal Code so that requirements for new development within the WUI to meet or exceed the requirements of the California Code of Regulations, including the California Building Code, the California Fire Code, California Wildland Urban Interface Code, and sections on SRA Fire Safe Regulations and Fire Hazard Reduction Around Buildings and Structures Regulations.

Action E: Work with land use applicants to locate development relative to landscape features that can act as buffers from oncoming wildfires (like agricultural lands and

maintained parks and greenbelts).

Action F: Ensure at least two evacuation routes for all new residential developments, with roads wide enough for emergency vehicles.

Action G: Require the installation of all new utilities underground to prevent ignitions from powerlines.

Action H: Implement development standards to assure adequacy of access for equipment, water supplies, construction standards, and vegetation clearance.

Action I: Prohibit increased land use densities in WUI areas, such as those allowed by State laws and density bonus laws, to minimize risk of exposure to persons in the event of wildfires.

Action J: Require that new essential public facilities be located outside of VHFHSZ to the maximum extent practicable.

Policy SEP-1.2: Fire Impact Reduction. Implement programs and policies that minimize risks to life and property posed by fires.

Action A: Coordinate with the Atascadero Municipal Water Company to ensure that fire flows and anticipated water supply storage capacity is adequate for both short- and long-term fire prevention and protection.

Action B: Continue to enforce the Building Code for the installation of residential fire sprinklers on new construction citywide.

Action C: Consider updating the Zoning Code to require conditions on land uses that serve mobility-limited persons, such as assisted care facilities or small group homes, to prepare and maintain detailed evacuation plans in the event of wildfires and other catastrophic events.

Policy SEP-1.3: Wildfire Risk Reduction. Increase wildfire resiliency using required and voluntary risk reduction regulations and strategies.

Action A: Adhere to State and local regulations and recommendations, including fire-safe design, of the Community Wildfire Protection Plan that address wildfire risk and vulnerabilities.

Action B: Pursue becoming a Fire Risk Reduction Community.

Action C: Encourage neighborhoods in becoming a NFPA recognized Firewise USA Community.

Action D: Identify and implement evacuation procedures in coordination with the City's Emergency Plan.

Action E: Support and coordinate with the Air Pollution Control District to allow burning within the City of Atascadero as a strategy for vegetation reduction.

Action F: Update and maintain regulations that balance the need for defensible areas around homes with the preservation of native trees, riparian corridors, and sensitive

habitats.

Action G: Identify residential developments in hazard areas that do not have at least two emergency evacuation routes identified and pursue grant funding opportunities to construct emergency access roads.

Action H: Update the Community Wildfire Protection Plan every five years to reflect the needs of the community and the changing risks in WUI areas. Ensure each update to the Community Wildfire Protection Plan identifies slope stability and wildfire hazard areas and mitigation strategies to reduce post-wildfire erosion.

Policy SEP-1.5: Vegetation Management Strategies. Implement vegetation management strategies and enhanced roadway standards in fire-prone areas through the City's Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

Action A: Implement the fuels mitigation projects in the Community Wildfire Protection Plan and establish a monitoring program to track the effectiveness of Community Wildfire Protection Plan fuel-treatment activities.

Action B: Identify and encourage mitigation of existing non-compliant properties to current defensible space standards.

Action C: Enhance roadside safety and access for emergency services by implementing rigorous vegetation clearance.

Action D: Continue to promote the efforts of the Fire Safe Council and continue to identify locations within the City where fuel mitigation treatments can be implemented to help slow wildfire spread.

Policy SEP-1.6: Community Outreach and Education. Ensure all community members and businesses are informed and empowered to address fire hazard vulnerabilities.

Action A: Conduct education and outreach campaigns that assist property owners with defensible space, fire-safe landscaping, home hardening, and wildfire preparedness.

Action B: Ensure wildfire mitigation, education, and outreach efforts are made to vulnerable populations.

Action C: Work with local and regional partners that can provide assistance to low-income households to maintain defensible space around their homes and properties.

Action D: Continue to educate the public about County-wide emergency preparedness resources.

Action E: Inform homeowners and residents of fire dangers, appropriate responses to fire, and ways to prevent loss.

Policy SEP-1.7: Redevelopment after Fire. Use lessons learned from major fire events to minimize future loss of life and property damage within high fire zones.

Action A: Develop a process to evaluate redevelopment after a large fire to meet current codes.

Action B: Require that any redevelopment in a VHFHSZ after a fire complies with all

current zoning, building, and fire codes.

Action C: Require that any redevelopment in a VHFHSZ include a fire protection plan.

Flooding

According to the San Luis Obispo County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan, the most common type of flooding event in Atascadero is riverine flooding, also known as overbank flooding. In addition to riverine flooding, Atascadero is susceptible to flash flooding in smaller watersheds. The highest risk areas of flooding include properties along the Salinas River, Atascadero Creek, Graves Creek, Boulder Creek, and Paloma Creek corridors. See **Figure 9-2** for the 100- and 500-year flood zone and dam inundation areas in Atascadero.

Goal SEP-2: Flood prevention and reduction strategies that limit damage to natural areas while safeguarding property and lives

Policy SEP-2.1: Reduce Flooding Risk. Ensure land use strategies consider flood control and stormwater management tactics to reduce the adverse impact of potential minor and major flooding.

Action A: Incorporate flood management strategies into land use analysis and development review.

Action B: Maintain and update a storm drainage infrastructure inventory.

Action C: Employ flood mitigation strategies in the development of plans and projects along creeks and waterways.

Action D: Seek funding to replace and/or improve existing aging infrastructure.

Policy SEP-2.2: Open Space for Flood Protection. Promote the enhancement and expansion of open space areas for flood management and passive recreation where appropriate and safe.

Action A: Protect floodplains by retaining and expanding, as feasible, open space areas that can retain stormwater, recharge groundwater aquifers, and prevent or reduce flooding.

Action B: Integrate stormwater features, as appropriate, into pocket parks in new development where such can provide co-benefits of flood control and passive or active open space.

Policy SEP-2.3: FEMA Requirements. Comply with all applicable Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) flood-management regulations and requirements.

Action A: Continue to maintain and periodically update flood hazard data, and coordinate with Federal, State, and local agencies responsible for flood hazard analysis and management activities.

Action B: Continue to incorporate features into capital projects and appropriate standards

that reduce flooding hazards.

Action C: Consider impacts to biological resources when performing flood-related preventive maintenance and repair.

Policy SEP-2.4: Structures in Floodplains. Enforce Federal regulations regarding placement of structures in floodplains, and maintain appropriate standards for development in flood-prone and poorly drained areas.

Action A: Require an evaluation of flood hazards and appropriate on-site mitigation options by a qualified professional for any project in a FEMA designated floodway during the development review process.

Action B: Discourage modifications to natural floodways, and enforce FEMA's Conditional Letter of Map Revision (CLOMR) and Letter of Map Revision (LOMR) processes if development occurs within an existing floodway.

Action C: Require the lowest finished floor of new construction in low-lying or other areas with serious drainage or flooding potential to be a minimum of one foot above the 100-year water surface elevation.

Action D: Prohibit development that will create new upstream or downstream flooding or drainage problems.

Policy SEP-2.5: Damage Reduction. Reduce flood damage in areas known to be prone to flooding.

Action A: Augment existing GIS and other data regarding low-lying areas with information obtained during storms.

Action B: Identify flood mitigation improvements for low-lying, flood-prone areas, and seek funding for those projects.

Action C: Catalog aging, undersized, or damaged drainage infrastructure and seek funding for replacement and repair.

Policy SEP-2.6: Flood Response. Prepare the City to respond to flood emergencies.

Action A: Train and adequately equip City personnel to a level appropriate to their positions and responsibilities to respond to flood emergencies.

Policy SEP-2.7: Dam Failure. Minimize the risk of dam failure.

Action A: Work with State agencies to assist with inspection and maintenance of the Atascadero Lake dam.

Action B: Coordinate with applicable agencies to ensure Atascadero has the latest information about impacts and emergency response coordination should failure occur to Salinas Dam on the Santa Margarita Lake reservoir.

Action C: Maintain a dam failure evacuation plan to guide public officials that includes use of the emergency alert system to notify the public.

Action D: Maintain, and update as needed, dam failure inundation mapping and emergency action plan for Atascadero Lake dam.

Hazardous Materials

The City's interest in maintaining a healthy environment drives policies to keep hazardous materials out of the air, water, and ground. A parallel interest is minimizing exposure of people to materials that could adversely affect their health. With land use policies allowing flex commercial and limited light industrial uses near residential neighborhoods, care will be taken to minimize risk to nearby residents and to people who work in the businesses.

Goal SEP-3: Reduced potential for harm to individuals and the environment due to the presence of hazardous materials

Policy SEP-3.1: Hazardous Substance Exposure. Reduce the potential for exposure to humans and the environment from hazardous substances.

Action A: Coordinate with the County to ensure that hazardous materials used in business and industry be used, handled, transported, and stored in accordance with Federal, State, County, and local regulations.

Action B: Work with Caltrans to require all transport of hazardous materials to follow approved routes.

Action C: Require businesses to maintain access needed for emergency response to spill incidents.

Action D: Ensure that regional routes for transportation of hazardous materials are identified and unsafe conditions comprehensively addressed with partner agencies.

Action E: Ensure State regulations and proper City protocols are followed to guard against failure of the City's wastewater treatment facility.

Action F: Coordinate with the State Regional Water Quality Control Board to implement standards that regulate discharge of pollutants into surface waters and groundwater.

Policy SEP-3.2: Pesticide Exposure. Reduce the potential of pesticide exposure to humans and the environment.

Action A: Ensure that emergency first responders and dispatch operators know to contact the County Agricultural Commissioner's Office or State Poison Control for technical assistance in the event of a pesticide-related emergency.

Action B: Minimize use and continue to train City staff on the safe application and handling of chemical-based pesticides at City parks and other City facilities.

Policy SEP-3.3: Oil and Gas Spills. Minimize potential hazards and spills from oil and gas pipelines and underground storage tanks.

Action A: Work with pipeline owners and operators and appropriate County and State agencies to develop adequate prevention and cleanup strategies.

Action B: Coordinate with property owners and the San Luis Obispo County Environmental Health Department to abate leaking underground storage tanks and monitor existing tanks for leakage.

Policy SEP-3.4: Radiation Exposure Reduction. Support San Luis Obispo County efforts to maintain a high level of radiation emergency preparedness.

Action A: Coordinate with the County and PG&E to review and update information about emergency preparedness and evacuations.

Action B: Coordinate with the County and PG&E to provide information about the Diablo Canyon Power Plant.

Seismic and Geologic Hazards

State building codes and careful site planning provide guards against catastrophic loss of life and damage to property in the event of an earthquake or events such as landslides. Land use policies address avoiding density in the hillside environments most susceptible to slope failure. The following goal and policies point to the importance of proactive measures in minimizing risk.

Goal SEP-4: Minimized exposure geologic and seismic hazards and the associated risks to life and property

Policy SEP-4.1: Risk Reduction. Ensure that the public is informed about the risks of geologic and seismic hazards and potential mitigation options.

Action A: Provide information to the public to improve awareness of geologic hazards and seismic safety.

Action B: Continually update information about faults and geologic hazards (including GIS data and geologic and fault mapping) as new information becomes available.

Action C: Work with property owners of unreinforced masonry buildings to retrofit or demolish structures consistent with the California Building Code.

Policy SEP-4.2: Structure Design. Ensure that structures are designed and located to withstand strong ground shaking, liquefaction, and seismic settlement.

Action A: Enforce building code requirements for new development, including addressing liquefaction potential and preparing geotechnical reports.

Action B: Enforce Building Code provisions pertaining to grading and construction relative to seismic hazards.

Action C: Update Title 8 of the Municipal Code as necessary to promote seismic safety in structural designs.

Action D: Require retrofitting and abatement of structural hazards to levels of risk acceptable to the Building Official.

Action E: Prioritize retrofitting and abatement of City-owned structures, including buildings, bridges, and other infrastructure, in areas determined to experience strong ground shaking during an earthquake.

Action F: Work with and support state and local agencies, including public utilities, to retrofit and harden water storage facilities, wastewater conveyance, electricity transmission lines, roadways, regional stormwater facilities, levees, and other utilities that could be negatively affected by earthquakes.

Policy SEP-4.3: Reduced Risk. Minimize development in areas at high risk for geologic hazards.

Action A: Avoid or adequately mitigate any development of critical facilities—hospitals, fire stations, emergency management headquarters, broadcast services, sewage treatment plants, and places of large congregations of people—in high-risk geologic hazard zones (e.g., fault zones, liquefiable soils, areas of slope instability).

Policy SEP-4.4: Erosion Control. Promote erosion control strategies that reduce hazards to structures, properties, and drainages.

Action A: Identify and require enhanced erosion control measures for properties that exhibit high erosion potential, are in areas of steep slopes, or have experienced past erosion problems.

Action B: Require development proposals to mitigate landslide and slope stability conditions that have the potential to impact adjacent properties, structures, and infrastructure.

Action C: Enforce Building Code provisions and other applicable ordinances regulating development on sloping ground.

Action D: Continue to require slope stability assessments by appropriate registered professionals for developments in areas of known slope instability, landslides, or slopes steeper than 10 percent.

Action E: Maintain mapping of high landslide risk areas and ensure that structures are engineered to account for any associated risk.

Noise

Part of Atascadero's attraction is its quiet neighborhoods, where the topography largely buffers homes from Highway 101 noise. Residents appreciate being able to hear sounds of nature in the evening and enjoy the outdoors. Downtown and larger parks are places where a noisier environment is acceptable, as people gather at these locations for community events and entertainment. This goal and associated policies and actions respond to varied community noise environments.

Goal SEP-5: Neighborhoods that maintain a strong quality of life while supporting a vibrant and thriving economy.

Policy SEP-5.1: Noise Ordinance. Maintain and update the City's Noise Ordinance to balance the economic, social, and rural vision of Atascadero.

Action A: Update the Noise Ordinance to incorporate construction best management practices to minimize construction noise when construction activities would be located within 1,000 feet of noise-sensitive land uses.

Action B: Update the Noise Ordinance to add conditions that would allow for temporary increases in noise in certain locations, such as Downtown, mixed-use areas, key commercail nodes, and parks, to accommodate special events. Encourage and allow these uses with appropriate noise thresholds.

Action C: Require projects to reduce noise exceeding the City's maximum allowable exterior and interior noise standards, unless exceptions are granted.

Policy SEP- 5.2: Land Use Compatibility. Prevent noise-sensitive land uses from encroaching upon existing or planned noise-producing uses, such as permitted industrial businesses and commercial activities, to allow businesses enterprises to thrive.

Policy SEP-5.3: Residential Noise Reduction. Preserve the tranquility of rural single-family residential areas by preventing the encroachment of noise-producing uses.

Policy SEP-5.4: Site Planning. Avoid or reduce noise impacts through site planning, project design, and implementation of the California Building Code and Health and Safety Code.

Action A: Consider updating the Municipal Code to provide options for new development to provide buffers other than sound walls when required.

Policy SEP-5.6: Transportation Noise. Reduce the impacts of transportation-related noise.

Action A: Avoid new development of noise-sensitive land uses in areas exposed to existing or projected future levels of noise from transportation noise sources which exceed the City's "normally acceptable" noise standards for land use compatibility unless the project design includes effective measures to reduce noise in outdoor activity areas and interior spaces to or below the "conditionally-acceptable levels," as specified for the given land use in **Table 9-2**.

Action B: Work with Caltrans to evaluate and develop traffic noise mitigation programs along Highway 101 and State Route 41.

Policy SEP-5.7: Stationary Noise. Reduce the impacts of stationary noise sources.

Action A: Avoid new development of noise-sensitive land uses where the noise level due to existing stationary noise sources will exceed the noise level standards of **Table 9-3** unless effective noise mitigation measures have been incorporated into the design of the

development to reduce noise exposure to or below the levels specified in **Table 9-3**.

Action B: Require mitigation of noise created by new proposed stationary noise sources or existing stationary noise sources which undergo modifications so such uses do not to exceed the noise level standards of **Table 9-3** on properties designated for noise-sensitive uses.

Action C: Maintain exceptions for Agricultural activities within the Agricultural land use designations during reasonable hours.

Action D: Work with private parties to reduce or mitigate noise exceeding allowed levels from existing industrial and commercial stationary-noise sources that impact nearby noise-sensitive land uses.

Table 9-2: Maximum Allowable Noise Standards for Transportation Noise Sources

Noise Sensitive Land Use	Interior Occupied Spaces (dBA)		Outdoor Activity Areas (dBA)1
	CNEL	Leq6	
Residential	45[4]		65[2,3]
Mixed-Use Residential	45[4]	--	--
Convalescent Care Facilities, Hospitals	45[4]		70[2,3]
Transient Lodging	45		65[2,3]
Schools, Libraries, Museums and Places of Worship	--	45	--
Playgrounds, Neighborhood Parks	--		705
Office Buildings	--	45	703

1. To be applied at outdoor activity areas. Where the location of outdoor activity areas is unknown, the exterior noise level standard shall be applied at the property line of the receiving land use.
2. Where it is not possible to reduce exterior noise levels to 65 dBA CNEL, or less, an exterior noise level of 70 dBA CNEL may be allowed provided that an acoustical analysis has been prepared for the project to identify available exterior noise-reduction measures to be incorporated and interior noise levels are in compliance with this table. For multi-family development, the exterior noise standard may be applied at a designated on-site outdoor common-use area in lieu of individual unit patios or balconies.
3. Where outdoor activity areas are not included in the project design, only the interior noise level standard shall apply.
4. In locations where railroad noise is the predominant noise source, the interior noise standard for residential land uses shall be reduced by 5 dB to account for the increased potential for sleep disruption to building occupants.
5. Where quiet is a basis for use.
6. 6. This standard is intended to apply to land uses with operational hours predominantly during the daytime hours. The interior noise standard applies to a typical worst-case hour during the period of use.

Table 9-3: Maximum Allowable Noise Standards for Non-Transportation Noise Sources

	Daytime 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM	Evening 7:00 PM to 10:00 PM	Nighttime 10:00 PM to 7:00 AM
Exterior Noise Standards[1,2]			
Hourly Equivalent (L_{eq} dBA)[3,5]	55	50	45
Maximum Level (L_{max} dBA)[4,5]	75	70	65
Interior Noise Standards[6]			
Hourly Equivalent (L_{eq} dBA)[3,5]	45	40	35
Maximum Level (L_{max} dBA)[4,5]	60	55	45

1. As determined at the outdoor activity area of the receiving noise-sensitive land use. Where the location of outdoor activity areas is unknown, the exterior noise level standard shall be applied at the property line of the receiving land use. In the event the measured ambient noise level exceeds the applicable noise level standard the applicable standard shall be adjusted so as to equal the ambient noise level.
2. Exterior noise standards are to be applied in noise-sensitive outdoor activity areas. Excludes mixed-use residential and school playgrounds.
3. Leq = Average or "Equivalent" noise level during the worst-case operational hour of use. Sound level measurements shall be made with slow meter response.
4. Lmax = Highest measured sound level occurring during a given interval of time (e.g., 1 hour). Sound level measurements shall be made with fast meter response.
5. Where the noise source in question consists of speech or music, or is impulsive in nature, or contains a pure tone, the noise standards are reduced by 5 dB.
6. As determined within occupied areas of the receiving noise-sensitive structure. In the event the measured ambient noise level exceeds the applicable noise level standard the applicable standard shall be adjusted so as to equal the ambient noise level.

Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Response

Community resilience refers to a community's ability to prepare for, adapt to, and recover from challenges. Resilient communities are those with public services, health systems, and infrastructure that will be put into effective action in the event of a hazard or emergency. Resiliency enables a community to recover more quickly from a disaster. Private businesses, individual residents, and volunteer organizations play a critical role. Key components of resilience are effective pre-planning for potential future catastrophic events and efficient response to disasters once they have occurred.

Goal SEP-6: A community well prepared to respond to and recover from natural and human-caused disasters

Policy SEP-6.1: Emergency Preparedness and City Response: Train City staff, coordinate with regional agencies, and implement programs to be prepared for and capable of responding to all emergency events.

Action A: Maintain and periodically update the City's Emergency Operations Plan.

Action B: Coordinate with San Luis Obispo County, adjacent cities, special districts, and unincorporated communities to prepare and regularly update joint emergency response and disaster response plans.

Action C: Consider hazard mitigation and climate resilience actions and strategies with the City's Capital Improvement Program and annual budgeting process.

Action D: Provide required training to ensure the readiness of response teams and Emergency Operations Center staff.

Action E: Follow statewide Standardized Emergency Management System procedures.

Action F: Consider planned evacuation routes with roadway improvement projects and incorporate identified elements as feasible.

Action G: Provide ongoing emergency preparedness training for all City staff.

Policy SEP-6.3: Resident Response Programs and Support. Help prepare and organize residents to respond effectively to disasters.

Action A: Provide educational materials to increase community awareness of hazard risks/vulnerabilities and strategies that community members and businesses can employ to mitigate risks/vulnerabilities.

Action B: Support education in the schools that teaches children how to avoid dangers and behave during an emergency.

Action C: Maintain and update, as needed, the emergency evacuation program for Atascadero neighborhoods.

Action D: Support disaster education and preparedness education geared towards residents through programs such as Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) or other community-based efforts.

Action E: Promote public awareness of the natural hazards and potential effects of disasters through community and volunteer organizations.

Action F: Incorporate strategies from the Community Wildfire Protection Plan, Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, and other resilience-building plans into outreach and educational information.

Policy SEP-6.4: Inter-Agency and Media Coordination. Coordinate with San Luis Obispo County and State agencies, news media, and others working to reduce the risks of disasters through effective preparedness, response, and recovery.

Action A: Continue to implement mutual aid, automatic aid, and California's Mutual Master Aid System to provide effective emergency response and to support emergency management.

Action B: Continue to execute agreements with public and private entities to support community emergency response and management.

Action C: Maintain a Public Information Officer (PIO) to meet with agency and media

representatives to coordinate communications, activities, and materials.

Action D: Support the efforts of many organizations – government, radio, newspapers and TV stations, utilities, emergency response providers, the Office of Emergency Services – that provide outreach and education to the community.

Policy SEP-6.5: Database Maintenance. Expand and update the database of safety-related information and convey that information to the public and decision makers.

Action A: Maintain an updated City GIS hazard map with information on fire hazard areas, native plant fuel loads, flood zones, un-reinforced masonry buildings, underground storage tanks, landslide areas, earthquake faults, pipelines, high voltage electrical transmission lines, railroads, state highways, and evacuation routes.

Action B: Seek from other government, academic, and private organizations new data that can be used for emergency preparedness and response.

Action C: Share hazard information with nearby jurisdictions, private and public organizations, and the public.

Policy SEP-6.6: Evacuation Coordination and Investments. Prioritize investments that expand and enhance evacuation capacity and capabilities.

Action A: Seek funding to improve existing single-access residential neighborhoods so they include additional access routes or other provisions to increase evacuation safety.

Action B: Analyze the capacity, viability, and safety of evacuation routes for hazard areas in Atascadero, and incorporate the results into City emergency operations and disaster recovery plans.

Policy SEP-6.7: Reduce or Eliminate Long-Term Risk. Perform assessments aimed at reducing or eliminating long-term risks to improve efficiency and decrease the cost of disaster response and recovery.

Policy SEP-6.8. Long-Term Recovery. Facilitate long-term recovery following a disaster.

Action A: Assist with public and private rebuilding efforts, provision of housing for displaced residents, and resumption of service, business and government functions.

Action B: Provide mutual aid and coordination assistance to agencies and organizations involved in disaster recovery.

Action C: Identify and coordinate with agencies needed to participate in assessing damage, providing citizens with care and shelter, and repairing critical infrastructure.

Action D: Ensure duplicate storage of essential City records.

Police Services

The quality of Atascadero's Police Department and its relationship with the community have a direct impact on the community's overall safety and security and contribute to the quality-of-life residents enjoy. The following goal, policies, and actions aim to enhance the services and operations of the Atascadero Police Department while strengthening community partnerships.

Goal SEP-7: Responsive police services that deter and respond to crime and support a safe and secure community

Policy SEP-7.1: Equipment and Training. Develop, maintain, and implement a Police Department Master Plan that guides the provision of equipment, facilities, training, and operations centers.

Action A: Establish internal and operational goals for the Department based on assessment of needs, as directed by the City Council.

Action B: Produce a Master Plan which includes guiding sections on equipment, facilities, training, and operations.

Policy SEP-7.2: Staffing Levels. Work to maintain optimal police staffing levels, including sworn officers and civilian support, necessary to meet projected community needs.

Action A: In conjunction with the Police Department Master Plan, determine an efficient allocation level to meet projected goals and needs.

Action B: Formulate and enact a staffing strategy to hire additional staff or consolidate the Department as needed.

Action C: Monitor and assess the allocation of staff to needs on a regular basis.

Policy SEP-7.3: Response Times. Identify, monitor, and achieve appropriate minimum police response times for all call priority levels.

Action A: Establish goals for police response times based on priority levels.

Action B: Identify and implement strategies and tools needed to monitor police response times.

Action C: Implement a strategy to improve police response times, if needed, and maintain an ongoing assessment of response times.

Policy SEP-7.4: Inter-Agency Coordination. Coordinate with local, regional, State, and Federal criminal justice agencies to promote regional cooperation in the delivery of police services.

Action A: Identify and coordinate with relevant agencies, including both current and potential future partners.

Action B: Establish and maintain a system for ongoing and case-specific communications.

Fire Protection Services and Emergency Medical Response

Fire prevention and protection services and emergency medical response benefit the community in many ways. Most critically, loss of life and property can be minimized with quality services and response to emergency incidents. The City's Fire Department provides fire and emergency medical response services to the community. Fire prevention and emergency response planning are priorities. Minimizing fire risks occurs through education, routine inspections, and requiring building renovations and new construction to comply with current fire access and building codes. The following goal, policies, and actions address fire department staffing levels, emergency response times, training, facilities and equipment, and coordination with ambulance service providers and local hospitals.

Goal SEP-8: A robust, well-trained, and highly capable fire protection and emergency response system

Policy SEP-8.1: Facilities and Equipment. Plan for adequate facilities, equipment, and personnel to meet firefighting demands.

Action A: Develop and maintain a Fire Department strategic plan.

Action B: Continue to plan for future facility, equipment, communication system, and personnel requirements.

Policy SEP-8.2: Fire Response. Sustain the ability of the Fire Department to respond to emergencies.

Action A: Prepare, adopt, and maintain standards of coverage for the Fire Department.

Action B: Maintain a fire-related GIS database to assist decision-makers with analyzing development proposals and to assist with fire response and planning. Update the database as new fire hazard severity maps become available.