

24. Public Services

This section covers a broad range of public services that should be evaluated for impacts resulting from a proposed discretionary project including law enforcement, emergency services, fire protection, schools, and libraries.

24.1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

24.1.1 Law Enforcement/Emergency Services

The California Highway Patrol handles all traffic enforcement and automobile accident investigations for the unincorporated areas of Ventura County. The California Highway Patrol Station in Moorpark shares its facilities with the Moorpark Police Services Center and serves approximately 650 miles of freeways, state routes, and unincorporated county roads, and many unincorporated areas of the county, including Oak Park, Newbury Park, Lynn Ranch, Somis, and Piru.

The Sheriff's Office oversees the county jail system and the investigation of all criminal activities occurring in the unincorporated areas. Beyond providing law enforcement services to the unincorporated county, the Sheriff's Office is also contracted to provide services to five of the county's ten incorporated cities (Thousand Oaks, Camarillo, Moorpark, Fillmore, and Ojai). There are seven patrol stations, as shown in Figure 7-11 in Section 7.5 of the Ventura County General Plan Background Report ("Background Report").

The Ventura County Sheriff's Office of Emergency Services (OES) works with all County departments, cities, public and private organizations, community, and civic groups to lead a "whole community" emergency management program. OES responsibilities include emergency management preparedness, planning, emergency alerts and warnings, implementation of emergency evacuation and shelter plans, maintenance and operation of the County Emergency Operations Center, and leading recovery operations.

The Ventura County Public Health Department includes the Ventura County Emergency Medical Services Agency. This Agency provides oversight and guidance of the delivery of emergency medical services throughout Ventura County.

24.1.2 Fire Protection Services

The Ventura County Fire Protection District (VCFPD) provides fire protection services to the unincorporated areas of the county and seven of the 10 incorporated cities: Thousand Oaks, Simi Valley, Moorpark, Camarillo, Port Hueneme, Santa Paula, and Ojai. VCFPD provides a range of programs and services that includes fire protection planning, fire prevention education, fire law and code enforcement, fire suppression and recovery, first responder level emergency medical services, and assistance and support for other non-fire emergencies such as floods, earthquakes, and other disasters.

The locations of VCFPD fire stations are shown in Figure 7-12 in Section 7.6 of the Background Report. Each fire station has a staffed fire engine; strategic stations (Stations 23, 27, 35, 41 and 54) also have a staffed fire truck, with specific tools to perform responsibilities including forcible entry, search and rescue, clearing smoke and gas from a building, and turning off utility services.

24.1.3 Public Schools

The term “public schools” includes public elementary, secondary and college level educational facilities. Ventura County public schools include 21 school districts. Of the 21 districts, 12 are “unified,” meaning they serve grades K-12. The remaining nine consist of seven elementary school districts and two high school districts. Table 7-19 of the Background Report lists school districts in the county. Figure 7-15 in Section 7.9 of the Background Report and *County View* and the Ventura County *Resource Management Agency Geographic Information System (and RMA GIS) Viewer* depict the school districts, all of which comprise Ventura County’s K-12 public education system.

24.1.4 Public Libraries

The Ventura County Library System provides services to all Ventura County residents, and serves unincorporated areas and cities, or areas within cities, which are neither served by a city library nor within the boundaries of independent library districts. The Ventura County Library System operates an administrative office in Ventura and branch libraries throughout the county. Table 7-22 in Section 7.10 of the Background Report lists the branch locations, number of hours each library is open per week, and square footage of each facility, and Figure 7-16 in Section 7.10 of the Background Report shows their locations.

24.2 THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

The determination of significance shall be made on a case-by-case basis and evaluated using the following threshold of significance specified below.

PUB-1 A project may have a significant impact if it would substantially interfere with law enforcement/emergency services, fire protection, schools, libraries, or other public facilities; or [result in the need for](#) ~~involve the provision of~~ new or physically altered governmental facilities [in order to maintain public services](#), the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, ~~in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for law enforcement/emergency services, fire protection, schools, libraries, or other public facilities.~~

24.3 IMPACT ANALYSIS

Guidance on addressing the questions from the Initial Study Checklist is provided below. In order to determine whether project impacts exceed or meet the criteria of the thresholds of significance in Section 24.2, the level of impact shall be evaluated based on the appropriate assessment methodologies as outlined below.

(a) *Would the project substantially interfere with the following public services, or involve the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for these public services?*

- *Law enforcement/emergency services;*
- *Fire protection;*
- *Schools;*

- *Libraries; or*
- *Other public facilities*

Law Enforcement/Emergency Services

Public safety depends on the timely availability of law enforcement and public safety personnel. Projects that increase demand for law enforcement or emergency services may have an adverse impact on public safety unless mitigated.

A proposed project should be reviewed by the Sheriff's Office and the VCFPD to determine whether the project would result in a potentially significant increase in demand for law enforcement or emergency services.

Projects should include security measures to address potential increases in theft, vandalism, disturbances, and/or substance abuse that could affect public safety in the surrounding area. Such security measures could include:

- nighttime security lighting;
- cameras;
- alarms;
- fencing;
- window and door locks;
- private security patrols;
- special event security assistance;
- treatment of vulnerable surfaces with anti-graffiti coating or landscaping;
- removal of graffiti within a specified time period; and/or
- other design measures to create a securely-defensible space.

Projects that include adequate security measures as determined by the Sheriff's Office would have a less than significant project-specific and cumulative impact on law enforcement and emergency services. Projects that do not include adequate measures to address increased demand for law enforcement or emergency services may be considered to have a potentially significant project-specific and cumulative impact.

Fire Protection Services

VCFPD staff shall review the project materials (site plans, grading plans, etc.) to determine the distance to the nearest full-time fire station. A site visit shall be conducted, if necessary, for an accurate measurement.

Distance/response time is the relationship between the distance that fire protection service facilities and equipment are located from the scene of the emergency, and how quickly they are able to respond to the emergency. A project may be considered to have a potentially significant impact if the project is more than five miles from a full-time fire department as measured from the apron of the fire station to the structure or pad of the proposed structure. Typically, a response time greater than 8 minutes and 30 seconds for unincorporated urban areas and 12 minutes for unincorporated rural areas may potentially result in an adverse impact on fire protection services. Rural areas are

generally those zoned for rural and agricultural uses located within 12 minutes of driving distance of a VCFPD fire station (a map of all VCFPD fire stations is available on the VCFPD website). Unincorporated areas of the county that are outside of urbanized areas are expected to have response times exceeding 12 minutes and may have response times of 30 minutes or more. Examples of such areas may include, but not limited to unincorporated areas of Ventura County in the Santa Monica Mountains, South Mountain, Sulfur Mountain, Backside of Lake Casitas, upper Highway 33 north of Ojai, Lockwood Valley, Rose Valley, and Black Canyon. Consult with VCFPD to estimate the project's response time and to determine whether the project's estimated response time would result in a potentially significant impact.

The amount and types of fire department personnel/equipment/facilities deployed vary depending on the nature of the emergency. VCFPD has determined that one firefighter is required per 3,000 to 4,000 persons, depending on the population density of the area to be serviced. To provide one firefighter 24 hours per day, 365 days per year, it is necessary to have four firefighter employees. There may be cases where a project would increase the need for fire protection services, which could result in the need for additional firefighter employees. In such cases, increases in revenue from assessed property value is typically used to accommodate increases in staffing. Therefore, such impacts to firefighter employees would be less than significant.

Impacts on fire department equipment and facilities may become significant when the magnitude of the project or the distance from existing facilities indicates that new or physically altered facilities or equipment would be required to serve the proposed project. For example, this may be the case for projects that would result in additional large concentrations of people, such as amusement parks, conference centers, and retirement communities, which can generate substantially higher demands on emergency services. Mitigation measures such as dedication of land for a new building site and availability of funds for facility operations or equipment could reduce the significant impact to less than significant, although the potential environmental impacts associated with constructing such new facilities would also need to be considered.

Public Schools

Projects located near schools shall be referred to the appropriate public school district for review and comment regarding the project's impact on the school. Any potential environmental impact on public school facilities that is not related to demand shall be discussed and analyzed under the appropriate subject area of the Initial Study Checklist. For example, if a potential noise or traffic safety issue related to a nearby school is identified, that discussion shall be included in the respective noise or traffic safety section of the Initial Study Checklist.

Typically, non-residential projects would not have an impact on the demand for schools. All residential projects (except senior citizen housing) would have an impact on schools and shall be sent to the appropriate public school district for review and comment (see *County View* and *RMA GIS Viewer* or contact RMA GIS staff to determine the applicable school district).

Large residential projects, (including new subdivisions) have the potential to impact a school district's ability to adequately serve additional students if classroom capacities are exceeded. However, Government Code Section 65995, (also referred to as SB 50, 1998), imposes limitations on the power of cities and counties to deny projects or require mitigation of school facility impacts as a condition of approval. Rather, the law authorizes school districts to levy developer fees. State law deems these fees to be "full and complete school facilities mitigation." Unless the school district responds otherwise, it is assumed that the district is collecting these state-authorized fees.

Public Libraries

A project may result in an adverse impact on public library facilities and services if it would interfere with the operations of an existing public library facility, put additional demands on a public library facility that is currently considered overcrowded by the Ventura County Library System, limit the ability of individuals to access public library facilities ~~by private vehicle or alternative transportation modes~~, including ~~by~~ walking, or cause a library facility to become overcrowded as determined by the Ventura County Library System.

Non-residential projects would not, in general, have an impact on the demand for public libraries. However, non-residential projects located near public library facilities shall be referred to the Director of Library Services for review. Consult with the Director of Library Services to determine whether nearby public library facilities are considered overcrowded or would become overcrowded as a result of the project.

Residential projects, including senior citizen housing, that may have an impact on public library facilities shall be sent to the Director of Library Services for review. The location of all public libraries under the control of the County of Ventura can be found in Figure 7-16 of the Background Report with further details listed for each library on Table 7-22.

If the project would result in significant impacts on public library facilities and services, mitigation should be provided to reduce impacts. Mitigation measures may include dedication of land for a new library facility and/or funding for facility operations or equipment to reduce the significant impact to less than significant, although the potential environmental impacts associated with constructing such new facilities would also need to be considered.

Other Public Facilities

The *Lead Agency* should consider whether the project would substantially interfere with or involve the provision of new or physically altered public facilities such as, but not limited to, public governmental buildings, facilities for non-agricultural water storage, water treatment and distribution, sewage facilities, flood control/stormwater control facilities, gas or electrical generation and distribution facilities, and transportation and transit facilities. The *Lead Agency* should consult with the appropriate public agency responsible for administering such facility regarding the project's potential impacts on the facility, and identify measures to mitigate any potentially significant impacts, if any.

Preparation of Initial Study Checklist

The following information shall be used to complete the Initial Study Checklist:

A determination of **No Impact (N)** shall be made if the project results in one or more of the following:

- Is not considered as one of the categories of projects that could generate a potentially significant increase in demand for law enforcement or emergency services.
- Has a response time that does not exceed 8 minutes and 30 seconds in urban areas and does not exceed 12 minutes in rural areas from the nearest full-time fire station.
- Is a non-residential project that is not located near a public school or public library.

A determination of **Less than Significant Impact (LS)** shall be made if the project would result in one or more of the following:

- Includes appropriate security measures, as determined by the Sheriff's Office, where applicable, to address potential increases in theft, vandalism, disturbances, and/or substance abuse that could affect public safety in the surrounding area.
- Is located outside of urbanized areas but would have an acceptable response time as determined by VCFPD.
- Would be located near a public school, but the project will not substantially interfere with the operations of, or increase demand on, public school facilities.
- Would be located near a public library, but the project will not substantially interfere with the operations of a public library, put additional demands on a public library that is currently considered overcrowded, or limit the ability of individuals to access the library.

A determination of **Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated (LS-M)** shall be made if the project would result in one or more of the following:

- Has prepared an emergency response plan that identifies mitigation measures to reduce the impact to a less than significant level. Proposed mitigation measures shall be reviewed by the Sheriff's Office and VCFPD. Mitigation measures may include provisions for new facilities, personnel, and funding.
- Would have an unacceptable extended response time as determined by VCFPD, which would result in a need for new or physically altered fire protection facilities or equipment in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives of fire protection services. However, the project has identified mitigation measures acceptable to the VCFPD to reduce the impact to a less than significant level. Mitigation measures may include provisions for new facilities, equipment, personnel, and/or funding.
- Would substantially interfere with the operations of or increase the demand for a public school. However, mitigation measures are provided to reduce those impacts to a less than significant level.
- Would substantially interfere with the operations of a public library, put additional demands on a public library that is currently considered overcrowded, or limit the ability of individuals to access the public library. However, mitigation measures are provided to reduce those impacts to a less than significant level. Mitigation measures may include provisions for new facilities, equipment, personnel, and/or funding.

A determination of **Potentially Significant Impact (PS)** shall be made, and further analysis shall be addressed in an Environmental Impact Report if there is *substantial evidence* that the project would result in one or more of the following:

- Substantially interfere with or increase demand for law enforcement or emergency services without having prepared an adequate emergency response plan; or require new or physically altered governmental facilities in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives of law enforcement or emergency services.
- Substantially interfere with or increase demand for fire protection; or require new or physically altered governmental facilities in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives of fire protection services.

- Substantially interfere with or increase demand for public schools; or require new or physically altered governmental facilities in order to maintain acceptable service levels or other performance objectives of public schools.
- Substantially interfere with the operations of a public library, put additional demands on a public library that is currently considered overcrowded, or limit the ability of individuals to access the library; or require new or physically altered governmental facilities in order to maintain acceptable service levels or other performance objectives of public libraries.

24.4 RESOURCES & REFERENCES

Source	Managing Agency/Organization	Online Access
Resources		
Ventura County CEQA Implementation Manual	Ventura County Resource Management Agency (RMA) Planning Division	PDF Website
Ventura County Initial Study Assessment Guidelines, Introduction	Ventura County RMA Planning Division	PDF Website
Ventura County Initial Study Checklist Template	Ventura County RMA Planning Division	PDF Website
References		
California Environmental Quality Act	California Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation, formerly Office of Planning and Research	Website
County View	Ventura County Geographic Information Systems	Website
Ventura County General Plan Background Report, Chapter 7	Ventura County RMA Planning Division	PDF Website
Ventura County Fire Stations	Ventura County Fire Department	Website
Ventura County RMA Geographic Information Systems Viewer	Ventura County Information Technology Services	Website