

Date of Hearing: June 2, 2020

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Lorena Gonzalez, Chair

AB 1923 (Salas) – As Amended March 12, 2020

Policy Committee: Housing and Community Development Vote: 6 - 0

Urgency: No State Mandated Local Program: No Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill requires the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) to consider whether to propose seismic gas shutoff devices be installed on gas piping in all or some dwelling units and hotels. Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Requires HCD, in consultation with the Office of the State Architect, the State Fire Marshal, and other interested parties, to consider whether to propose for adoption and approval by the California Building Standards Commission (CBSC) the requirement that seismic gas shutoff devices be installed in all or some dwelling units, hotels, motels and lodging houses.
- 2) Requires HCD, as part of its consideration, to review the findings of its 2005 study entitled “SB 1992 (Perata) Final Report Seismic Gas Shutoff Devices and Excess Flow Gas Shutoff Devices” to determine if the issues raised in the study have been adequately addressed.
- 3) Requires HCD, if it determines it is appropriate to propose mandatory or voluntary building standards, to propose building standards for consideration by CBSC in the code adoption cycle that begins after January 1, 2022.
- 4) Requires HCD, if it determines it is not appropriate to propose building standards, to explain its decision in writing.
- 5) Authorizes CBSC to expend funds from the Building Standards Administration Special Revolving Fund for these purposes.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) One-time costs of approximately \$221,000 (GF) in the first year and \$211,000 in the second year to HCD for staff to conduct stakeholder outreach, draft proposed building standards, and engage in the building standards adoption process. If HCD determines building standards are not appropriate, these costs would be less.
- 2) One-time costs of \$200,000 (GF) to HCD to retain a consultant specializing in seismic safety devices to determine if prior issues raised with seismic shutoff valves have been adequately addressed.
- 3) Minor and absorbable costs to CBSC to review and adopt standards.

- 4) Minor and absorbable costs to the State Architect to respond to consumers, manufacturers and local building departments subject to device installation and inspection, if building standards are enacted.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** This bill seeks to better protect residents and prevent property damage by determining whether installing gas shutoff valves in homes could help prevent fires caused by gas leaks in the event of an earthquake.
- 2) **Background.** Seismic gas shutoff devices are specialized valves that attach to a gas meter that automatically close in the event of an earthquake of a sufficient magnitude, cutting off gas from flowing into the line. In the event that such valves are activated, they require a professional technician to come to the building to re-install gas service.

Multiple local jurisdictions, including the cities of Los Angeles and Berkeley, and the Counties of Alameda and Contra Costa (unincorporated areas), have enacted ordinances requiring the installation of seismic safety shutoff devices to prevent fires during and after earthquakes.

SB 1992 (Perata), Chapter 1051, Statutes of 2002, similar to this bill, required HCD, in consultation with the Office of the State Architect and the State Fire Marshal, to investigate the merits of requiring seismic gas shutoff devices. In 2005, HCD issued a report concluding it would not propose mandatory building standards and indicated numerous reasons for that finding. However, in the report HCD noted it continues to support existing law permitting local governments to require the installation of gas shutoff devices based on local geological, topographical or climatic reasons.

Recognizing that concerns raised in 2005 may not be valid today, this bill requires HCD to revisit its old analysis to determine if, 15 years later, requiring gas shutoff valves is now appropriate.

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