
THIRD READING

Bill No: SB 668
Author: Rubio (D)
Amended: 4/29/19
Vote: 21

SENATE NATURAL RES. & WATER COMMITTEE: 9-0, 4/23/19
AYES: Stern, Jones, Allen, Borgeas, Caballero, Hertzberg, Hueso, Jackson,
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SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 6-0, 5/16/19
AYES: Portantino, Bates, Bradford, Hill, Jones, Wieckowski

SUBJECT: Fire hydrants: water suppliers: regulations

SOURCE: California Water Association

DIGEST: This bill changes the requirement for water agencies having to comply with disaster preparedness plan requirements from public water systems with 10,000 or more service connections to urban water suppliers; and also requires an urban water supplier to review and revise its disaster preparedness plan every five years.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Enacts the California Emergency Services Act, which, among other things:
 - a) Requires all public water systems with 10,000 or more service connections to:
 - i) Review and revise their disaster preparedness plans in conjunction with related agencies, including, but not limited to, local fire departments and the Office of Emergency Services (OES) to ensure that the plans are sufficient to address possible disaster scenarios. These plans should

- examine and review pumping station and distribution facility operations during an emergency, water pressure at both pumping stations and hydrants, and whether there is sufficient water reserve levels and alternative emergency power, including, but not limited to, onsite backup generators and portable generators.
- ii) Following a declared state of emergency, to furnish an assessment of their emergency response and recommendations to the Legislature within six months after each disaster, as well as implementing the recommendations in a timely manner.
- b) Requires OES to establish appropriate and insofar as practical, emergency response and recovery plans, including mutual aid plans, in coordination with public water systems with 10,000 or more service connections.
- 2) Enacts the Urban Water Management Planning Act, which defines “urban water suppliers” as “a supplier, either publicly or privately owned, providing water for municipal purposes either directly or indirectly to more than 3,000 customers or supplying more than 3,000 acre-feet of water annually. An urban water supplier includes a supplier or contractor for water, regardless of the basis of right, which distributes or sells for ultimate resale to customers. This part applies only to water supplied from public water systems ...”

This bill:

- 1) Changes the requirement for water agencies having to comply with the disaster preparedness plans from public water systems with 10,000 or more service connections to urban water suppliers.
- 2) Requires disaster preparedness plans to be reviewed and revised every five years.

Comments

Recent Fires Highlight Value of Water Agencies having Disaster Preparedness Plans. The sponsor shared this anecdote. “California Water Service (Cal Water) is one of the drinking water suppliers that serves the areas affected by the 2018 Woolsey Fire, including the City of Thousand Oaks. During the height of the fire, crews battling the fire were pulling about five times more water from the system than its normal daily demand, which pushed available stored water supplies to the brink. To avoid a crisis that would have left everyone from homeowners to firefighters without water, Cal Water’s team worked with firefighters, law enforcement, and wholesale water agencies to replenish available water suppliers.

These efforts, which included transporting emergency equipment about 50 miles from another Cal Water service area with the help of the California Highway Patrol, would not have been possible without appropriate disaster preparedness and planning; without it, Cal Water would not have been able to respond to the emergency as effectively and efficiently as it did.”

Why The Change To Urban Water Suppliers? This bill expands the number of water agencies needing to review and revise disaster preparedness plans from those with 10,000 or more service connections to those with 3,000 customers or supplying more than 3,000 acre-feet a year (acfy). The 3,000 customer/3,000 acfy threshold triggers much of California water planning and management, including:

- Adopting urban water management plans,
- Adopting water shortage contingency plans,
- Complying with the new urban water use objectives and water use reporting requirements, and
- Requiring water meters.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: Yes

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee:

- Ongoing special fund costs for OES likely in the low hundreds of thousands of dollars annually to expand their current requirements for disaster preparedness plans to urban water suppliers.
- By requiring local urban water suppliers to comply with disaster preparedness plan requirements, this bill creates a state-mandated local program. To the extent that the Commission on State Mandates determines that the provisions of this bill create a new program or impose a higher level of service on local agencies, local agencies could claim reimbursement of those costs (General Fund). The annual amount is unknown but likely significant due to the large number of urban water suppliers in the state.

SUPPORT: (Verified 5/16/19)

California Water Association (source)
California Water Service

OPPOSITION: (Verified 5/16/19)

None received

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: According to the author, “Protecting public health is the primary goal of community drinking water systems, and having an up-to-date and workable disaster preparedness plan helps achieve this goal in any crisis situation.”

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