

GOVERNOR'S VETO
AB 1143 (Bennett)
As Enrolled September 16, 2025
2/3 vote

SUMMARY

- 1) Requires, on or before January 1, 2027, the Office of the State Fire Marshal's (SFM's) Wildfire Mitigation Advisory Committee to develop a home hardening certification program that identifies home hardening measures, including defensible space, that can be implemented during renovation or property improvement projects, or both, to substantially reduce the risk of loss during a fire and bring existing building stock into alignment with provisions adopted in the California Building Code, as specified.
- 2) Authorizes the SFM to expend funds from the Building Standards Administration Special Revolving Fund (BSA Fund), upon appropriation by the Legislature, for the purposes of developing the home hardening certification program.
- 3) Incorporate additional changes to Section 13159.5 of the Health and Safety Code proposed by SB 514 to be operative only if this bill and SB 514 are enacted and this bill is enacted last.

Governor's Veto Message

This bill would require the Office of the State Fire Marshal's Wildfire Mitigation Advisory Committee within the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) to develop a home-hardening certification program by January 1, 2027.

At a time when Californians are grappling with rising insurance costs due to natural disasters exacerbated by climate change, the state has launched multiple efforts to expedite proven and cost-effective home-hardening practices, aiming to improve insurability for millions of homeowners. CAL FIRE currently administers California's Wildfire Mitigation Program, established in 2019 to strengthen community-wide resilience against wildfires. The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) and CAL FIRE, working side-by-side with counties and cities, have launched a statewide wildfire home-hardening playbook that at-risk communities can lift straight off the shelf. In 2022, CDI introduced its "Safer from Wildfires" framework, a first-of-its-kind regulation that requires insurance companies to offer discounts to homeowners and businesses that take specific wildfire mitigation steps. These are just a few examples that demonstrate the state's commitment to tackling this important issue.

This year, the Legislature sent me multiple bills with the intention of building upon this ongoing work. Unfortunately, rather than providing a coordinated approach, these measures are in conflict with one another, tasking different state entities with similar objectives. The lack of harmony between these efforts will not only result in conflicting outcomes but also confusion for consumers, insurance companies, local governments, and emergency responders.

I encourage the Legislature to revisit this important issue next year and work collaboratively to navigate the different approaches to setting hardening standards, including determining the responsible state entity. In the meantime, California will continue to aggressively implement the multiple initiatives underway to mitigate wildfire risk, encourage cost-effective structure hardening and retrofitting, facilitate vegetation management, and address the availability and cost of insurance.

COMMENTS

California Wildfire Mitigation Program: In 2019, the Legislature passed and the Governor signed into law AB 38 to create the California Wildfire Mitigation Program (CWMP). The law authorized a joint exercise of powers agreement between Cal OES and Cal FIRE to strengthen community-wide resilience against wildfires. This included developing a state home hardening initiative to retrofit, harden, and create defensible space for homes at high risk of wildfires, focusing on high socially-vulnerable communities, and providing financial assistance for low- and moderate-income households. The effort is meant to encourage cost-effective wildfire resilience measures to create fire-resistant homes, businesses, public buildings, and public spaces. This includes a community hardening approach to achieve wildfire resilience, low-cost retrofits with ignition-resistant materials to bring homes up to the standard of the California Building Code Chapter 7A, community and homeowner wildfire education on defensible space and home retrofitting, and providing financial assistance to support home hardening work for qualifying homeowners.

In coordination with state and local partners, Cal OES and Cal FIRE also established a state wildfire home hardening framework that can be modeled throughout vulnerable California communities. The framework provides the opportunity for California communities to leverage state and federal resources and develop local wildfire home hardening programs that address community resiliency needs. To help expedite local wildfire home hardening program development and inform the build-out of the state's framework, Cal OES and Cal FIRE will provide state funding, resources, and support for demonstration communities to implement community wildfire home hardening projects in areas with high social vulnerability and wildfire risk.

According to the Author

California's wildfire destruction has reached a tipping point. As the wildfires in Southern California have shown fires are now sweeping into urban areas in new, more intense and uncontrollable ways. We must do more to ensure that homes are more than just superficially hardened, and take a holistic, science-based, approach. AB 1143 moves us towards an evidence based approach by directing the State Fire Marshal's Wildfire Mitigation Advisory Committee to develop a certification program that provides homeowners a voluntary option for a holistic home hardening approach.

Arguments in Support

The League of California Cities write, "The League of California Cities (Cal Cities) is pleased to support AB 1143 (Bennett), which would require, on or before January 1, 2027, the Office of the State Fire Marshal to develop a home hardening certification program identifying the best home hardening measures that can be taken during property renovations or improvement projects to reduce fire risk. California has the highest wildfire risk in the US. In recent years, the state has experienced a growing number of highly destructive wildfires due to climate change and over a century of logging and fire suppression. The devastating impacts of these wildfires has unfortunately resulted in the destruction of over 57,000 structures in the last decade."

The Independent Insurance Agents & Brokers of California, Inc. write, "While California has made important strides in fire prevention through building codes, defensible space requirements, and educational resources, these efforts have largely functioned as individual components rather than a cohesive approach. Research from the National Institute of Standards and Technology, in

collaboration with CalFire, clearly demonstrates that effective home hardening requires addressing multiple vulnerabilities simultaneously. No single measure alone can adequately protect a structure from the complex threats posed by wind-driven embers, direct flame contact, and radiant heat. AB 1143 addresses this critical gap by creating a certification program that identifies appropriate combinations of home hardening products, construction techniques, and defensible space measures. By establishing a comprehensive framework, this legislation will provide homeowners with clear guidance on how to effectively protect their properties from wildfire."

Arguments in Opposition

None on file.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Senate Committee on Appropriations, "CAL FIRE reports costs of approximately \$2.31 million in year one and \$2.22 million in year two and ongoing to develop and implement the certification program (Building Standards Administration Special Revolving (BSA) Fund and General Fund)."

VOTES

ASM EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT: 7-0-0

YES: Ransom, Hadwick, Arambula, Bains, Bennett, Calderon, DeMaio

ASM NATURAL RESOURCES: 14-0-0

YES: Bryan, Alanis, Connolly, Ellis, Flora, Garcia, Haney, Hoover, Kalra, Muratsuchi, Pellerin, Schultz, Wicks, Zbur

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 11-0-4

YES: Wicks, Arambula, Calderon, Caloza, Elhawary, Fong, Mark González, Hart, Pacheco, Pellerin, Solache

ABS, ABST OR NV: Sanchez, Dixon, Ta, Tangipa

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 79-0-0

YES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Chen, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

SENATE FLOOR: 38-0-2

YES: Allen, Alvarado-Gil, Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Becker, Blakespear, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cervantes, Cortese, Dahle, Durazo, Grayson, Grove, Hurtado, Jones, Laird, Limón, McGuire, McNerney, Menjivar, Niello, Ochoa Bogh, Padilla, Pérez, Reyes, Richardson, Rubio, Seyarto, Smallwood-Cuevas, Stern, Strickland, Umberg, Valladares, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener

ABS, ABST OR NV: Choi, Gonzalez

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 79-0-1

YES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Chen, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Johnson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas
ABS, ABST OR NV: McKinnor

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