SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
Senator Anna Caballero, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

AB 1285 (Committee on Emergency Management) - State Fire Marshal: lithium-ion battery facilities: guidance

Version: February 21, 2025
Urgency: No
Hearing Date: August 18, 2025

Policy Vote: G.O. 15 - 0
Mandate: No
Consultant: Janelle Miyashiro

Bill Summary: AB 1285 requires the State Fire Marshal (SFM) to develop fire prevention, response, and recovery measures for utility grade lithium-ion battery storage facilities that include best practices for the health and safety of emergency services personnel and timely and accurate information sharing with local emergency managers and public safety agencies regarding incidents.

Fiscal Impact:

- The Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) reports costs of approximately $389,000 in year one, $451,000 in year two, and $430,000 annually ongoing (California Fire and Arson Training Fund). Costs include two additional staff to develop and conduct trainings and to consult with local fire officials, architects, engineers, and contractors on problems of fire and public safety in the design of Battery Energy Storage Systems, construction, and operation of buildings and facilities subject to regulation by the SFM.
- The Office of Emergency Services (OES) anticipates costs to consult with the SFM on the development of the measures to be minor and absorbable.

Background: One of the primary risks related to lithium-ion batteries is thermal runaway. Thermal runaway is a phenomenon in which the lithium-ion cell enters an uncontrollable, self-heating state. Thermal runaway can result in extremely high temperatures, violent cell venting, smoke, and fire. Faults in a lithium-ion cell can result in a thermal runaway, and these faults can be caused by internal failure or external conditions. Lithium-ion battery fires and explosions are triggered by the thermal runaway reactions inside the cell and, when stored near or next to another battery or batteries, can set off a chain reaction, making an already tough fire to fight even worse. When they reach thermal runaway, lithium-ion battery fires can burn for hours or even days, until all the flammable chemicals in the battery have been consumed by the combustion reaction.

Proposed Law:

- Requires the SFM, in consultation with OES, to develop fire prevention, response, and recovery measures for utility grade lithium-ion battery storage facilities. Requires the measures to include:
    - Best practices for the health and safety of emergency services personnel.

- Best practices for owners and operators to share timely and accurate information with local emergency managers and public safety agencies regarding incidents.

Related Legislation: AB 841 (Patel, 2025) requires the SFM, in consultation with the Division of Occupational Safety and Health, to develop a working group to make recommendations regarding personal protective equipment used in responding to lithium-ion battery fires, as specified. AB 841 is pending in this committee.

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