

Date of Hearing: April 22, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 1873 (Bennett) – As Amended March 26, 2026

Policy Committee:	Emergency Management	Vote:	6 - 0
	Utilities and Energy		17 - 0

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

SUMMARY:

This bill revises existing criteria, set to take effect July 1, 2030, for a backup energy source to operate critical fire suppression infrastructure used by a water supplier in Ventura County.

Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Requires a backup energy source to operate critical fire suppression infrastructure used by a water supplier in certain fire-prone areas in Ventura County to be able to provide power within 90 minutes of a loss of power, instead of 60 minutes, or as soon as practically possible after deenergization. If the backup energy source does not provide power within 90 minutes, the water supplier must notify the Ventura County Office of Emergency Services as soon as practically possible, but no later than 72 hours after a loss of power.
- 2) Revises an existing reporting requirement to the Ventura County Board of Supervisors by the Ventura County Fire Department to include certain data points related to the 90-minute power requirement.
- 3) Specifies that the existing requirement for a water supplier to establish an emergency preparedness plan is not mandatory until July 1, 2027.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) Likely minor and absorbable costs to the Ventura County Fire Department to report additional information to the county. If the Commission on State Mandates determines this bill’s requirements to be a reimbursable state mandate, the state would need to reimburse these costs to Ventura County (General Fund).
- 2) Potential cost savings to local water districts in Ventura County by easing certain infrastructure and reporting requirements.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

Last year, I authored AB 367 to ensure that Ventura County would be able to use its resources to their maximum effectiveness. As that bill moved through the process, I committed to working with cities in my district to address potential implementation concerns. This bill, AB

1873, reflects the collaborative discussion we had with our local water suppliers about their implementation issues.

This bill is supported by the California Professional Firefighters and City of Thousand Oaks.

- 2) **Ventura County Emergency Response.** AB 1650 (Portantino), Chapter 472, Statutes of 2012, required a water company regulated by the California Public Utilities Commission to develop and adopt an emergency and disaster preparedness plan. The resultant rulemaking required these plans to account for high fire danger, windstorms, and public safety power shutoffs that may result from severe weather events. AB 367 (Bennett), Chapter 690, Statutes of 2025, beginning July 1, 2030, requires a water supplier in Ventura County to have access to sufficient backup energy sources to operate critical fire suppression infrastructure to supply water for at least 24 hours in high or very high fire hazard severity zones. This bill makes various changes to the AB 367 requirements requested by local entities.
- 3) **Related Legislation.** AB 2013 (Bennett) requires certain community water systems located in a high or very high fire risk area to include an annex to the system's disaster preparedness plan that includes information regarding system preparedness and resiliency during a wildfire. AB 2013 failed passage in the Assembly Emergency Management Committee.

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