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# SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES AND WATER

Senator Josh Becker, Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

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**Bill No:** AB 1873 **Hearing Date:** June 9, 2026  
**Author:** Bennett  
**Version:** May 27, 2026 Amended  
**Urgency:** No **Fiscal:** Yes  
**Consultant:** Genevieve Wong

**Subject:** County of Ventura: fire suppression: backup energy source

## SUMMARY

This bill would revise existing requirements, set to take effect July 1, 2030, for Ventura County water suppliers to extend the time for mobile or mutual aid backup energy sources to come online from 60 minutes to 90 minutes after a loss of power, require water suppliers to notify the Ventura County Office of Emergency Services (VC OES) if that backup power is not available within 90 minutes, set a July 1, 2027, deadline to develop an emergency preparedness plan, and add a new assessment item to the existing post-fire reporting requirements.

## BACKGROUND AND EXISTING LAW

### ***Assembly Bill 367 (Bennett, Chapter 690, Statutes of 2025) (AB 367).***

Last year, the Legislature enacted AB 367, which requires Ventura County water suppliers to maintain backup energy sources for critical fire suppression infrastructure in high and very high fire hazard severity zones. The legislation was prompted by the history of devastating fires in Ventura County and was designed to aid in the continued delivery of water for fire suppression during power outages and other emergencies. Additional background information on the underlying policy can be found in this committee's prior analysis of AB 367.

### ***Existing law:***

- 1) Commencing July 1, 2030, requires a water supplier, as specified, to have access to sufficient backup energy sources to operate critical fire suppression infrastructure needed to apply water for at least 24 hours for the purpose of fire suppression in high or very high fire hazard severity zones (HFHSZ or VHFHSZ, respectively) in Ventura County, as specified, or have access to alternative sources of water supplied by a different water supplier or agency, as specified (Water Code (WAT) §7080(a)(1)).
- 2) Authorizes a water supplier to use mobile backup energy sources or procure an energy source via an established mutual aid agreement provided that the backup energy source can provide power within 12 hours of the National Weather Service alerting the region of a red flag warning and provide power for at least 24 hours after a loss of power and within 60 minutes of a loss of power (WAT §7080(a)(2)).
- 3) Requires a water supplier to establish an emergency preparedness plan for response to red flag warnings, extreme weather events, and other major power outages or emergencies that pose a potential threat to providing water service in

coordination with the Ventura County Office of Emergency Services (VC OES) and the Ventura County Fire Department (VCFD) (WAT §7080(d)(1)(A)).

- 4) Requires a water supplier, if the National Weather Service alerts the region of a red flag warning, to initiate action under the above-described emergency preparedness plan (WAT §7080(d)(2)).
- 5) Requires the VCFD, in cooperation with the water supplier, to make a report if any fire damages and makes uninhabitable more than 10 residential dwellings within the service area of the water supplier. The report is required to include:
  - a) Whether water tanks were filled at an appropriate level for fire suppression, as outlined in the emergency preparedness plan.
  - b) Whether disruption of water delivery due to lack of electricity was timely and appropriately mitigated by the water supplier.
  - c) Whether critical fire suppression infrastructure and backup energy sources met certain fire safety standards developed by the VCFD.

### **PROPOSED LAW**

This bill would:

- 1) Extend the time for mobile or mutual aid backup energy sources to come online from 60 minutes to 90 minutes after a loss of power, or as soon as practically possible after deenergization. The bill would require the water supply to notify VC OES as soon as practically possible, but no later than 3 business days after a loss of power, if the backup energy source does not provide power within 90 minutes of a loss of power.
- 2) Require the emergency preparedness plan to be established by July 1, 2027.
- 3) Add a new assessment item to the post-fire reporting requirements that would require VCFD to include whether a water supplier that used mobile backup energy source or mutual aid agreement for a backup energy source notified the VC OES due to a loss of power and the amount of time critical infrastructure for that water supplier experienced a loss of power.

### **ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT**

According to the author, "Ventura County has experienced its three most destructive fires in the last 8 years - Thomas (2017), Woosley (2018), and Mountain (2024). Last year, I authored AB 367 to ensure that Ventura County will 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. It makes sensible changes that preserve the integrity of last year's bill while creating more efficient paths towards effective implementation."

**ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION**

None received

**COMMENTS**

***This bill is double referred.*** This bill is double referred with the Senate Emergency Management Committee, with this committee being the committee of first referral. Elements of this bill under the jurisdiction of the Senate Emergency Management Committee are included here for context and completeness only and will be discussed before that Committee.

***Related legislation***

AB 2013 (Bennett), of the current legislative session, would have required community water systems located in a high or very high fire risk area to include an annex to its disaster preparedness plans with information regarding system preparedness and resiliency during a wildfire, including an assessment of the minimum water tank levels necessary to maintain average daily system capacity during a fire, identification of the minimum number of and types of water pumps that are necessary to maintain average daily capacity, the number of water pumps servicing high or very high fire risk area that do not have emergency backup energy sources, an assessment of system resiliency in the event of a loss of power, and an assessment of the fire risk status and fire hardening measures for infrastructure elements deemed to be a critical point of failure. AB 2013 also would have prohibited information in the annex from enlarging or diminishing any existing liability, or demonstrating, on its own, a substantial cause of damages resulting from a wildfire. This bill failed passage in the Assembly Emergency Management Committee.

SB 1153 (Caballero), of the current legislative session, requires, beginning January 1, 2028, urban retail water suppliers with service areas in a high or very high fire hazard severity zone to include wildfire-specific response procedures in their disaster preparedness plans, including any applicable federal plan, and specifies the liability limitations of public water systems when responding to wildfires, as specified. This bill is pending referral in the Assembly.

AB 367 (Bennett, Chapter 690, Statutes of 2025) requires a water supplier to take specified actions to help ensure effective fire response and adequate water availability to aid in fire suppression in high or very high FHSZs in Ventura County.

**SUGGESTED AMENDMENTS: none**

**SUPPORT**

California Professional Firefighters  
City of Thousand Oaks  
County of Ventura

**OPPOSITION**

None Received