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**SENATE COMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

**Senator Henry Stern**

**Chair**

**2025 - 2026 Regular**

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**Bill No:** AB 1873 **Hearing Date:** 6/16/2026  
**Author:** Bennett  
**Version:** 5/27/2026 Amended  
**Urgency:** No **Fiscal:** Yes  
**Consultant:** Cassie Royce

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

**SUMMARY:** Revises existing requirements, set to take effect July 1, 2030, for Ventura County (VC) water suppliers to maintain backup energy sources for critical fire suppression infrastructure and establishes a July 1, 2027, deadline for them to develop an emergency preparedness plan, as specified.

**ANALYSIS:**

Existing law:

- 1) Requires, pursuant to AB 367 (Bennett), Chapter 690, Statutes of 2025, a VC water supplier 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, or have access to alternative sources of water supplied by a different water supplier or agency, as specified, beginning July 1, 2030.
- 2) Authorizes a VC 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 (NWS) 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.
- 3) Requires a VC 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 VC Office of Emergency Services (VC OES) and the VC Fire Department (VCFD).

- 4) Specifies that, if the NWS alerts the region of a red flag warning, a VC water supplier shall initiate action according to the required emergency preparedness plan.
- 5) Requires the VCFD, in cooperation with the VC water supplier, to make a report if any fire damages render more than 10 residential dwellings uninhabitable within the service area of the water supplier. The report must include the following:
  - 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.

This bill:

- 1) Extends the timeframe 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.
- 2) Requires the VC water supplier 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 the 90 minutes timeframe.
- 3) Provides that the emergency preparedness plan shall be established by July 1, 2027.
- 4) Revises the VCFD's post-fire report requirements in 5) above to also include an assessment of whether a VC water supplier that used mobile or mutual aid backup energy sources notified the VC OES due to a loss of power and disclosed the amount of time that the water supplier's critical infrastructure experienced a loss of power.

## Background

*Author's statement.* 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.”

*Ventura County emergency response.* The VC County Emergency Operations Plan provides the structure and processes that all key partner agencies within the county use to respond, and initially recover from, a major emergency or disaster event. The County's Hazard Mitigation Plan also covers emergency response and provides policies on evacuation planning and the planning and placement of essential facilities. According to the author, the requirements set forth in AB 367 were prompted by the history of devastating fires in Ventura County and are designed to aid in the continued delivery of water for fire suppression to further enhance the county's response during power outages and other emergencies. This bill makes changes to the AB 367 requirements to address implementation issues raised by local entities.

### **Prior/Related Legislation**

AB 2013 (Bennett), of the current legislative session, would have required specified community water systems located in high or very high fire risk areas to provide an annex to their disaster preparedness plans that includes information on a number of specified items relating to system preparedness and resiliency during a wildfire and 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. (Failed passage in 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. (Pending in the Assembly Emergency Management Committee)

AB 1650 (Portantino), Chapter 472, Statutes of 2012, requires a water company regulated by the California Public Utilities Commission to develop and adopt an emergency and disaster preparedness plan.

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

**SUPPORT:**

California Professional Firefighters  
City of Thousand Oaks  
Ventura County Board of Supervisors

**OPPOSITION:**

None on file

**ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT:** In support of the bill, the Ventura County Board of Supervisors writes that, “AB 1873 would address several.... issues by providing additional implementation flexibility and clearer operational standards. In particular, the measure’s revisions related to the timeframe for backup energy sources to come online, emergency preparedness planning requirements, and post-incident reporting would better align statutory requirements with real-world emergency response conditions and utility operations. These changes would help support more consistent and workable implementation while preserving the broader public safety objectives established in AB 367. The bill also would facilitate continued coordination among local governments, water suppliers, emergency response agencies, and other stakeholders involved in carrying out these requirements.”

**DUAL REFERRAL:** Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee and Senate Emergency Management Committee