

CONCURRENCE IN SENATE AMENDMENTS

AB 1873 (Bennett)

As Amended May 27, 2026

Majority vote

SUMMARY

Revises existing requirements, set to take effect July 1, 2030, for a Ventura County water supplier to maintain backup energy to operate critical fire infrastructure, as specified, by requiring a mobile or mutual aid backup energy source to provide power within 90 minutes, instead of 60, requiring the water supplier to notify the County Office of Emergency Services when a backup energy source does not provide power within 90 minutes, sets a deadline of July 1, 2027 for the completion of their emergency preparedness plan, and adding a new assessment requirement to existing reporting requirements .

Senate Amendments

Amends the timeline in which the water supplier must notify the Ventura County Office of Emergency Services when a backup energy source does not provide power, as specified, to within three business days, instead of within 72 hours.

COMMENTS

Wildfires Expanding into Urban Settings: Throughout California's history the state has contended with destructive wildfires impacting communities that were constructed amongst or adjacent to timber and chaparral forests. These areas, commonly referred to as the "wildland urban interface," have long been considered some of the most fire-prone areas in the state. In the last decade, unprecedented wildfires led to the deadliest wildfire in California's history. The impacts of these wildfires cannot be understated, many lives were lost, thousands of homes were destroyed, and residents, in some cases entire communities, have been forced to relocate. Billions of dollars in damage was caused to homes, businesses, and infrastructure throughout the state.

In recent years, an increasing number of wildfires have burned outside of wildland areas and into more urban settings. While persons living in forested areas and those in the wildland urban interface, have long faced significant risks from wildfires, as a result of climate change, more Californians face wildfire risks than ever before. Wildfires across California have repeatedly exposed vulnerabilities in public water systems, especially in high and very high severity zones.

Ventura County Water Access Issues During Wildfires: During the Mountain Fire in November 2024, some of Ventura County's water providers experienced a significant delay in restoring operations after losing power. According to the Calleguas Municipal Water District, the utility pump was without electricity for several hours and did not receive a generator until late that evening, resulting in water supply challenges. The Mountain Fire also disrupted firefighting efforts in the Camarillo foothills, where two water pumps went offline during active fire suppression. This interruption delayed the refilling of hillside water tanks, which are critical for maintaining water pressure in high-elevation fire hydrants. This eventually led to the fire hydrants running dry. During the 2017 Thomas Fire, similar disruptions occurred when several water pumping stations lost power. In Ojai, the fire caused direct damage to the infrastructure, rendering the water system inoperable.

AB 367: As mentioned in the author's statement, Assemblymember Bennett authored AB 367 which, among other things, requires Ventura County water suppliers to: have backup power, or access to alternative water sources, capable of supplying water for at least 24 hours for fire suppression in high or very high fire hazard severity zones; annually inspect critical fire suppression infrastructure and backup energy sources and notify significant water delivery reductions, as specified, to the County Office of Emergency Services.

According to the Author

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 Support

According to the City of Thousand Oaks, "This bill is an amendment to AB 367, which was signed into law in 2025, and addresses a vital gap in our public safety infrastructure by ensuring that water suppliers in high and very high fire hazard severity zones within Ventura County maintain the power, water, and resources necessary to fight wildfires during emergencies."

Arguments in Opposition

None on file.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Committee on Appropriations:

- 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.

VOTES:

ASM EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT: 6-0-1

YES: Alanis, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bennett, DeMaio, Ransom

ABS, ABST OR NV: Bains

ASM UTILITIES AND ENERGY: 17-0-1

YES: Petrie-Norris, Patterson, Boerner, Calderon, Davies, Mark González, Harabedian, Hart, Irwin, Kalra, Papan, Rogers, Schiavo, Schultz, Ta, Wallis, Zbur

ABS, ABST OR NV: Chen

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 13-0-2

YES: Wicks, Hoover, Arambula, Caloza, Dixon, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Pacheco, Pellerin, Solache, Ta, Tangipa

ABS, ABST OR NV: Calderon, Muratsuchi

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 73-0-7

YES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Carrillo, Castillo, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Johnson, 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, Ward, Wicks, Zbur, Rivas

ABS, ABST OR NV: Arambula, Bennett, Caloza, Chen, Flora, Wallis, Wilson

SENATE FLOOR: 39-0-1

YES: Allen, Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Becker, Blakespear, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cervantes, Choi, Cortese, Dahle, Durazo, Gonzalez, 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: Alvarado-Gil

UPDATED

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