

Date of Hearing: April 29, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 1934 (Bennett) – As Amended March 25, 2026

Policy Committee:	Emergency Management	Vote:	6 - 0
	Natural Resources		14 - 0

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

**SUMMARY:**

This bill requires the State Fire Marshal’s (SFM’s) Wildfire Mitigation Advisory Committee (WMAC) to develop an implementation plan for a home hardening certification program.

Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Requires, by January 1, 2028, the WMAC to develop an implementation plan for a home hardening certification program that identifies home hardening measures, including defensible space, that can be voluntarily implemented during renovation or property improvement projects to substantially reduce the risk of loss during a fire and bring existing building stock into alignment with state building standards for wildland-urban interface (WUI) areas.
- 2) Requires the WMAC to provide certain recommendations in developing the implementation plan, such as identifying the agency that should implement the certification program and establishing the home hardening standards for the certification program, and provide a report on the recommendations to the Legislature by January 1, 2028.

**FISCAL EFFECT:**

- 1) Likely absorbable costs to the WMAC to develop the implementation plan, as this bill requires establishment of the implementation plan only and not the certification program itself. In addition to the SFM, the WMAC is comprised of representatives from various state agencies, such as the Office of Emergency Services (OES) and the Department of Insurance (CDI), among others.

However, since the primary purpose of this bill is to create a plan, which is akin to a report, this bill qualifies for this committee’s suspense file consistent with committee rules and custom and practice.

- 2) Cost pressures of an unknown, but likely significant amount, to the agency identified by the WMAC to manage the implementation plan and implement the certification program (General Fund or Building Standards Administration Special Revolving Fund).

**COMMENTS:**

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

We must do more to ensure that homes are more incentivized to effectively fire harden their home. A trusted, state authorized, certification program creates the foundation we need to build a series of incentives designed to motivate homeowners to make this valuable investment in the survivability of their home.

This bill is supported by firefighter groups, local government entities, and others.

- 2) **Background. Home Hardening.** Home hardening includes vegetation management compliance and building materials used to resist the intrusion of flames or embers projected by a wildland fire. California Building Standards Code Chapter 7A, developed with the SFM, provides for ignition resistant construction standards, such as fire-resistant siding, tempered glass, and ignition-resistant roofs, that must be applied to new construction or when retrofitting an older home the WUI.

**Safer from Wildfires.** The Safer from Wildfires framework (Framework) was created in February 2022 in partnership between CDI, OES, Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), and other agencies. The Framework provides a list of home and community wildfire mitigation measures that a consumer may take to protect a structure, immediate surroundings, and community, such as adopting a Class-A fire-rated roof, a five-foot ember resistant zone, ember- and fire-resistant vents, or upgraded windows. Under subsequent regulations proposed by Insurance Commissioner (IC) Ricardo Lara, which took effect on October 14, 2022, a consumer who adopts more Framework mitigation steps may save money on insurance costs.

**California Wildfire Mitigation Program (CWMP).** AB 38 (Wood), Chapter 391, Statutes of 2019, created the CWMP, a joint powers authority between OES and CAL FIRE to develop and administer a comprehensive wildfire mitigation program to encourage cost-effective structure hardening and retrofitting in high-risk, socially vulnerable communities and provide financial assistance for low- and moderate-income households. The CWMP is currently being piloted in three select areas, with lessons learned in these communities being used to refine the CWMP framework before expanding to additional areas.

The Legislative Analyst's Office's (LAO's) April 23, 2025, presentation to the Assembly Budget Subcommittee on Climate Crisis, Resources, Energy and Transportation notes that "CWMP has been slow to launch. Despite receiving funding starting in 2020-21, recent reports indicate that roughly 20 homes have completed retrofits. The average cost per home has been roughly \$50,000." The LAO adds:

The state lacks clear cost-effectiveness data both on how pursuing defensible space and home hardening efforts compares to other risk-reduction activities, as well as on the relative performance of different programs designed to improve defensible space compliance and home hardening adoption. [AB 38], as subsequently modified, requires CalFire and [OES] to submit a report evaluating the cost-effectiveness of the [CWMP] compared to other programs by July 2028, which may help provide insights.

**Purpose of Certification.** Although private home hardening certifications exist, this bill requires the SFM's WMAC to develop an implementation plan for a state-administered home

hardening certification program to bring housing stock into alignment with Chapter 7A building standards. Aside from the direct benefits to the property by undertaking home hardening measures, the purpose of state certification in relation to other ongoing state efforts to incentivize home hardening and reduce wildfire risk is unclear.

- 3) **Related Legislation.** AB 1 (Connolly), Chapter 472, Statutes of 2025, requires CDI to consider, every five years, whether to update the Safer from Wildfires regulations to include certain building hardening measures.

AB 888 (Calderon), Chapter 536, Statutes of 2025, established the California Safe Homes grant program, administered by CDI, to achieve home hardening of insurable properties to mitigate wildfire risk, among other goals.

AB 1143 (Bennett) is similar to this bill, except AB 1143 requires development of the home hardening certification program itself instead of an implementation plan for the program. AB 1143 was vetoed by Governor Newsom, who stated the Legislature sent the governor “multiple bills” with the intention of building upon the state’s ongoing “efforts to expedite proven and cost-effective home-hardening practices,” but:

Unfortunately, rather than providing a coordinated approach, these measures are in conflict with one another, tasking different state entities with similar objectives. The lack of harmony between these efforts will not only result in conflicting outcomes but also confusion for consumers, insurance companies, local governments, and emergency responders.

I encourage the Legislature to revisit this important issue next year and work collaboratively to navigate the different approaches to setting hardening standards, including determining the responsible state entity.

AB 1960 (Bennett) authorizes CALFIRE to disburse Wildfire Prevention Grants Program funds to “identified cohesive fire communities,” defined as a community in which a certain percentage of homes is certified as hardened. AB 1960 is pending hearing by this committee.

SB 1076 (Perez) prohibits an insurer from refusing to offer, sell, or renew a residential property insurance policy to an applicant whose property meets minimum home hardening and wildfire mitigation standards established by IC regulations. SB 1076 failed passage in the Senate Insurance Committee.

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