



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

As we continue to grapple with increasingly frequent and destructive wildfires, it's imperative California understand where our resources need to be focused. AB 1964 requires the SFM to conduct a survey on the number of homes in moderate, high, and very high [FHSZs], that are successfully hardened and not in addition to an estimate of what it would cost to harden homes that need it. With comprehensive data on the state of home hardening, California ensures its resources for hardening incentives go to the communities that need it most – ultimately protecting homes and giving us the best bang for our buck.

This bill is supported by a wildfire risk management company and the Nature Conservancy.

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 in the wildland-urban interface.

**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.

This bill requires the SFM to compile a report to determine whether homes in moderate, high, and very high FHSZs meet certain home hardening standards developed by the SFM. The report must include the number of homes meeting home hardening standards, the number of homes requiring more hardening to meet such standards, and an estimate of the cost to bring those homes up to standards.

- 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 1934 (Bennett) requires the SFM’s Wildfire Mitigation Advisory Committee to develop an implementation plan for a home hardening certification program. AB 1934 is pending on this committee’s suspense file.

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.