

Date of Hearing: April 22, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 2349 (Solache) – As Introduced February 19, 2026

Policy Committee: Natural Resources Vote: 14 - 0

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

SUMMARY:

This bill, subject to appropriation, requires the Air Resources Board (ARB) to expand its incident air monitoring program to provide support for a regional network of air quality incident response centers (AQIRCs) operated by local air districts to facilitate local and regional emergency air monitoring response.

In addition, this bill:

- 1) Requires ARB and air districts to jointly select each location throughout the state where an AQIRC will be established by ARB or a district, including at least one AQIRC located in the south coast district and requires each entity be responsible for operating the AQIRC it establishes.
- 2) Requires an air district, before establishing an AQIRC within its jurisdiction, to coordinate with ARB and any other relevant air district to develop operational plans for the AQIRC.
- 3) Requires ARB and each air district that operates an AQIRC to coordinate to provide emergency air monitoring response for disasters or other crises impacting air quality and public health in the state, as determined by ARB and that air district and provides that ARB and each air district that operates an AQIRC is responsible for performing the duties set forth in this bill only to the extent funding is provided by the Legislature.
- 4) Authorizes funding made available by the Legislature for purposes of this bill to be used for numerous specified purposes, such as funding to plan, create, equip, and maintain AQIRCs, including for the acquisition of monitoring equipment and systems, vehicles, and other necessary equipment, and facilities, as well as funding of staffing resources, including regional emergency response coordinators and technical staff at air districts.
- 5) Provides that as part of the operation of an AQIRC, air quality monitoring may be conducted for targeted air contaminants of concern, as identified by ARB or the air district operating that AQIRC, during disaster or emergency situations and during the recovery period from a disaster or emergency to aid impacted communities, and that the monitoring may be conducted in coordination with unified command centers, joint information centers, other state agencies, local public health agencies, and other entities, as appropriate.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) ARB will incur significant ongoing costs to implement the requirements of this bill (General Fund). ARB estimates costs of approximately \$8.8 million in fiscal year (FY) 2027-28 and \$5.7 million in FY 2028-29 and ongoing for about 11 new positions, contract funds, and equipment costs. Implementation costs include, among many other things, establishing, equipping, and maintaining AQIRCs with portable equipment, rapid response trailers, and contacts for laboratory analysis; creating advanced data collection, interpretation, and visualization platforms to strengthen centralized emergency response systems; purchasing and maintaining equipment; conducting real-time prediction modeling and assessment of hazardous air pollutant dispersion during incidents; coordinating with state and local agencies to provide unified command; various enforcement-related tasks; rulemaking activities; community engagement; and other tasks.
- 2) By expanding the duties of an air district, this bill imposes a state-mandated local program. Costs incurred by an air district are potentially reimbursable by the state, subject to a determination by the Commission on State Mandates (General Fund). However, the bill specifies that ARB and each air district is responsible for operating an AQIRC and performing other duties set forth in this bill only to the extent the Legislature provides funding for those purposes.

The Legislative Analyst's Office recently warned of General Fund structural deficits of around \$35 billion per year in the 2027-28 FY and ongoing.

The author has submitted a budget request for \$5 million for implementation of this bill, including equipment and facilities, air monitoring and data management, technical staffing and regional coordination, and training programs to ensure preparedness for wildfires and other disasters. In addition to the \$5 million, the author is requesting "continued prioritization of funding for this program through an ongoing appropriation."

COMMENTS:

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

California has experienced numerous disasters in recent years that have threatened air quality and public health. Expanding California's emergency air monitoring capacity is essential to protect public health and ensure informed decision-making during disasters. AB 2349 would strengthen California's emergency air monitoring capacity and support coordinated state and local responses during air quality emergencies.

- 2) **Background.** Over the last several years, numerous catastrophic events affecting air quality and public safety have occurred throughout the state. The Palisades and Eaton fires burned 23,700 and 14,000 acres, respectively. The University of California, Los Angeles' Anderson School of Management estimates that the economic impacts of the wildfires could range between \$76 billion and \$131 billion, with insured losses estimated up to \$45 billion. On top of the economic impacts, wildfires are devastating to public health. Wildfire smoke poses a significant public health threat, particularly due to fine particulate matter, which can cause respiratory and cardiovascular problems and exacerbate existing health conditions.

In November 2023, a fire at a historic hangar at the former Tustin Air Base led to a public health emergency due to the presence of asbestos in debris and ash samples collected near the hangar. SCAQMD provided air monitoring data to the City of Tustin, which supported the declaration of a local and countywide state of emergency. In January 2025, a fire that erupted at the Moss Landing Power Plant led to evacuation orders for about 1,200 nearby residents.

The South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD), the sponsor of this bill, notes these incidents “highlight the urgent need to expand and modernize emergency air monitoring and response capabilities, including providing timely information to the public,” and that “there is a critical need for training of state and local air district staff on the Incident Command System (ICS) as well as advanced emergency preparedness and coordination with first responders, local government, and public health agencies.”

- 3) **Related Legislation.** AB 1106 (Michelle Rodriguez) of the current legislative session was similar to this bill and was held on this committee’s suspense file.

Analysis Prepared by: Nikita Koraddi / APPR. / (916) 319-2081