

ASSEMBLY THIRD READING
AB 2349 (Solache)
As Introduced February 19, 2026
Majority vote

SUMMARY

Requires the Air Resources Board (ARB), subject to appropriation, 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 in order to facilitate emergency air monitoring response at the local and regional level.

Major Provisions

- 1) Requires ARB, subject to appropriation, to expand its incident air monitoring program to provide support for a regional network of AQIRCs operated by districts in order to facilitate emergency air monitoring response at the local and regional level.
- 2) Requires ARB and the districts to jointly select locations to establish AQIRCs throughout the state, including at least one AQIRC in the south coast district. Requires ARB to coordinate with, and provide funding to, districts.
- 3) Requires ARB and each district that operates an AQIRC to coordinate to provide emergency air monitoring response for disasters or other crises impacting air quality and public health.
- 4) Authorizes funding for specified purposes.
- 5) Requires, as part of the operation of an AQIRC, air quality monitoring to be conducted for targeted air contaminants of concern, in coordination with unified command centers, joint information centers, other state agencies, and other entities, as appropriate.

COMMENTS

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. The impact on local businesses and employees in the affected areas is an estimated \$297 million.

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 (PM2.5), which can cause respiratory and cardiovascular problems and exacerbate existing health conditions. It can travel deep into the lungs and may even enter the bloodstream. For urban wildfires, air toxics are a concern as smoke and ash from homes and businesses can contain asbestos, metals, and other pollutants of concern.

Wildfires are not the only health-impacting events requiring localized air monitoring. 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. The smoke and debris also tested positive for heavy metals, including lead, arsenic and nickel. The city of Tustin declared a local state of emergency, and the Orange County Board of

Supervisors declared a county-wide state of emergency. The cleanup costs exceeded \$54 million. A similar event also took place in January 2025, when a fire erupted at the Moss Landing Power Plant, a large battery storage facility, located south of San Francisco. The incident led to evacuation orders for about 1,200 nearby residents. About 80% of the structure and its batteries were destroyed in the fire. After burning through the night, emergency officials declared the fire a local emergency.

These events highlight the critical need for enhanced localized air monitoring response to emergency events. This bill is intended to provide timely information on existing levels of potentially dangerous air pollutants emitted as a result of wildfires and other disasters or emergencies to increase public awareness and inform health and emergency response agencies. This information will help improve emergency preparedness and response, protect public health, and strengthen statewide and local air quality management.

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.

Arguments in Support

According to sponsor South Coast Air Quality Management District, California has experienced numerous disasters in recent years that have threatened air quality and public health, including the Eaton and Palisades Fires, Moss Landing and Central Coast Battery Fires, ExxonMobil explosion, Aliso Canyon gas leak, Tustin Hangar Fire, and other incidents. These incidents highlight the urgent need to expand and modernize emergency air monitoring and response capabilities, including providing timely information to the public. Further, 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. AB 2349 would improve California's ability to monitor and respond to air pollution during disasters by providing timely information on potentially dangerous air pollutants released during wildfires and other emergencies. The program would strengthen emergency preparedness and public health protection.

Arguments in Opposition

None received.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee:

- 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 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."

VOTES

ASM NATURAL RESOURCES: 14-0-0

YES: Bryan, Ellis, Alanis, Connolly, Garcia, Haney, Hoover, Kalra, Macedo, Boerner, Pellerin, Schultz, Wicks, Zbur

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 15-0-0

YES: Wicks, Hoover, Aguiar-Curry, Calderon, Caloza, Dixon, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Pacheco, Pellerin, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Ta, Tangipa

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