
SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Senator Blakespear, Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No: AB 2349
Author: Solache
Version: 2/19/2026
Urgency: No
Consultant: Heather Walters

Hearing Date: 6/24/2026
Fiscal: Yes

SUBJECT: State Air Resources Board: regional air quality incident response program

DIGEST: This bill requires the California Air Resources Board (CARB) 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

ANALYSIS:

Existing federal law:

- 1) Sets, pursuant to the federal Clean Air Act (CAA) and its implementing regulations, National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) for six criteria pollutants, designate air basins that do not achieve NAAQS as nonattainment, and require states with nonattainment areas to submit a State Implementation Plan (SIP) detailing how they will achieve compliance with NAAQS. (42 U.S.C. 7401 *et seq.*)

Existing state law:

- 1) Establishes CARB as the air pollution control agency in California and requires the ARB, among other things, to control emissions from a wide array of mobile sources and coordinate with local air districts to control emissions from stationary sources in order to implement the CAA. (Health and Safety Code (HSC) 39000 *et seq.*)
- 2) Requires CARB to (1) divide the state into air basins based upon similar meteorological and geographic conditions, and consideration for political boundary lines whenever practicable, and (2) adopt air quality standards for each air basin in consideration of the public health, safety, and welfare. (HSC 39606)

- 3) Requires, subject to the powers and duties of the CARB, air districts to adopt and enforce rules and regulations to achieve and maintain the state and federal air quality standards in all areas affected by emission sources under their jurisdiction, and to enforce all applicable provisions of state and federal law. (HSC 40001)
- 4) Requires air districts to develop attainment plans detailing how they will attain and maintain state air quality standards, and submit those plans to CARB. (HSC 40910 *et seq.*)

This bill:

- 1) Requires CARB, 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 districts in order to facilitate emergency air monitoring response at the local and regional level.
- 2) Requires CARB and the districts to jointly select locations to establish AQIRCs throughout the state, including at least one AQIRC in the south coast district. Requires CARB to coordinate with, and provide funding to, districts.
- 3) Requires CARB 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.

Background

- 1) *California fires and air quality.* 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.

Comments

- 1) *Purpose of Bill.* 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.”

Related/Prior Legislation

AB 1106 (Rodriguez, 2025), was nearly identical to this bill. It was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

SOURCE: South Coast Air Quality Management District

SUPPORT:

California Air Pollution Control Officers Association
California Contract Cities Association
Mayor Patricia Lock Dawson, City of Riverside
South Coast Air Quality Management District

OPPOSITION:

None received

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