
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

AB 2349 (Solache) - State Air Resources Board: regional air quality incident response program

Version: July 1, 2026

Urgency: No

Hearing Date: August 3, 2026

Policy Vote: E.Q. 7 - 0

Mandate: Yes

Consultant: Ashley Ames

Bill Summary: This bill would require 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.

Fiscal Impact:

- CARB estimates ongoing costs of approximately \$8.8 million in fiscal year 2027-28 and \$5.7 million annually thereafter (General Fund) to establish, equip, and maintain AQIRCs with portable equipment, rapid response trailers, and contracts for laboratory analysis; to create advanced data collection, interpretation, and visualization platforms to strengthen centralized emergency response systems; to purchase and maintain equipment; to conduct real-time prediction modeling and assessment of hazardous air pollutant dispersion during incidents; to coordinate with state and local agencies to provide unified command; to carry out various enforcement-related tasks; to conduct rulemaking activities; to conduct community engagement; and to carry out other tasks.
- By expanding the duties of an air district, this bill would impose a state-mandated local program. Costs incurred by an air district would potentially be reimbursable by the state, subject to a determination by the Commission on State Mandates (General Fund). However, the bill specifies that CARB 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.

Background: The Palisades and Eaton Fires burned 23,700 and 14,000 acres respectively, with UCLA's Anderson School of Management estimating total economic impacts between \$76 billion and \$131 billion, insured losses up to \$45 billion, and roughly \$297 million in impacts to local businesses and employees in the affected areas. Beyond the economic toll, wildfire smoke is a serious public health threat, chiefly through fine particulate matter (PM2.5), which travels deep into the lungs and may enter the bloodstream, causing respiratory and cardiovascular problems and worsening existing conditions. Urban wildfires raise the additional concern of air toxics, since smoke and ash from burned homes and businesses can carry asbestos, metals, and other pollutants.

Wildfires are not the only events requiring localized monitoring. A November 2023 fire at a historic hangar at the former Tustin Air Base created a public health emergency when debris and ash samples near the site tested positive for asbestos along with heavy

metals including lead, arsenic, and nickel; the city declared a local emergency, the Orange County Board of Supervisors declared a county-wide emergency, and cleanup costs exceeded \$54 million. In January 2025, a fire at the Moss Landing Power Plant, a large battery storage facility south of San Francisco, destroyed roughly 80% of the structure and its batteries, burned overnight, prompted evacuation orders for about 1,200 residents, and was declared a local emergency.

These incidents underscore the need for stronger localized air monitoring during emergencies. The bill is intended to deliver timely information on levels of potentially dangerous air pollutants released by wildfires and other disasters, raising public awareness, informing health and emergency response agencies, and thereby improving emergency preparedness and response, protecting public health, and strengthening statewide and local air quality management.

Proposed Law: This bill would:

1. Require CARB, 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. Require CARB and the districts to jointly select locations to establish AQIRCs throughout the state, including at least one AQIRC in the south coast district. Require CARB to coordinate with, and provide funding to, districts.
3. Require 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. Authorize funding for specified purposes.
5. Require, 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.

Related Legislation:

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

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