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THIRD READING

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Bill No: AB 367  
Author: Bennett (D), et al.  
Amended: 8/29/25 in Senate  
Vote: 21

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SENATE NATURAL RES. & WATER COMMITTEE: 6-1, 6/24/25  
AYES: Limón, Allen, Grove, Hurtado, Laird, Stern  
NOES: Seyarto

SENATE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE: 5-1, 7/9/25  
AYES: Durazo, Arreguín, Cabaldon, Laird, Wiener  
NOES: Seyarto  
NO VOTE RECORDED: Choi

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 5-2, 8/29/25  
AYES: Caballero, Cabaldon, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab  
NOES: Seyarto, Dahle

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 75-1, 6/2/25 - See last page for vote

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**SUBJECT:** Water: County of Ventura: fire suppression

**SOURCE:** Author

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**DIGEST:** This bill requires a water supplier to take certain actions that would help ensure effective fire response and ensure adequate water availability to aid in fire suppression in high or very high fire hazard severity zones in Ventura County.

**ANALYSIS:**

Existing law:

- 1) Requires the State Fire Marshal (SFM) to identify areas in the state as moderate, high, or very high fire hazard severity zones, as specified.

(Government Code (GOV) §51178)

- 2) Establishes the Office of the SFM (OSFM) within the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE). (Health and Safety Code (HSC) §13100)
- 3) Requires the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) to identify backup power systems needed for telecommunications facilities not on customers' premises. Authorizes the CPUC to set performance reliability standards for telecommunications backup power, subject to best practices and feasibility. (Public Utilities Code (PUC) §2892.1)

This bill:

- 1) Requires, commencing July 1, 2030, a water supplier, as defined by the bill, to have access to sufficient backup energy sources to operate critical fire suppression infrastructure needed to supply water for at least 24 hours for fire suppression in high or very high fire hazard severity zones (HFHSZ or VHFHSZ) in Ventura County, as specified, or have access to alternative sources of water supplied by a different water supplier or agency, as specified.
- 2) Requires the water supplier to identify, and provide to the Ventura County Office of Emergency Services (VC OES) no later than May 1, 2026, all critical fire suppression infrastructure or alternative sources of water.
- 3) Requires, by January 1, 2027, the Ventura County Fire Department (VCFD), in consultation with water suppliers and local fire departments, to develop minimum fire safety standards for the purpose of fire hardening critical fire suppression infrastructure and backup energy sources located in the HFHSZ or VHFHSZ.
  - a) Requires VCFD to annually inspect critical fire suppression infrastructure and backup energy sources in those zones to ensure critical fire suppression infrastructure and backup energy sources located in those zones meet the fire safety standards developed by VCFD. Requires the inspection to occur in consultation with the local fire department, as provided.
  - b) Requires the water supplier to annually inspect critical fire suppression infrastructure and backup energy sources serving those zones, but are not located within the zone, to ensure functionality.

- 4) Requires a water supplier to establish, in coordination with VC OES and VCFD, an emergency preparedness plan for response to major power outages or emergencies that pose a potential threat to providing water service.
- 5) Requires a water supplier to notify VC OES within 3 business days, or as soon as it becomes aware, during a fire event, of any reduction in its water delivery capacity that could substantially hinder firefighting operations or significantly delay the replenishment of reservoirs.
- 6) Requires VCFD to present a specified report to the Ventura County Board of Supervisors of any fire damages that made more than 10 residential dwellings within the service area of a water supplier uninhabitable.
- 7) Exempts from these provisions:
  - a) Water delivery systems that are gravity fed and do not require backup power to continue to operate during a power shutoff.
  - b) Nonpotable, recycled, irrigation, or agricultural water systems that are not used for fire suppression.

## **Background**

*Wildfire and water supply study.* In a 2021 briefing report titled *Wildfire & Water Supply in California*, produced by University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources, California Institute for Water Resources and the Luskin Center for Innovation at the University of California, Los Angeles, the authors recommend investing in remote-operable water infrastructure and backup power systems—such as solar panels and battery storage—to help maintain water service during wildfires while reducing risk to utility personnel. The report acknowledges, however, that access to technology, the cost of these upgrades, and the managerial knowledge for implementation may be a limiting factor for water systems.

The report also recommends, as part of their emergency response plans, that water systems develop specific wildfire mitigation plans that include local or regional partnerships with surrounding water systems or water wholesalers with intertying supply connections. Developing these mutual aid relationships can lead to sharing of resource and critical staff and expertise support during an emergency.

See the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee Analysis for additional background information.

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: Yes

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee,

- “Unknown one-time and ongoing costs, likely in excess of \$150,000, to the Ventura Office of Emergency Services and Ventura Fire to implement the provisions of this bill. If the Commission on State Mandates determines this bill’s requirements to be a reimbursable state mandate, the state would need to reimburse these costs to Ventura County (General Fund).
- To the extent this bill increases or adds new requirements for a local water district, such districts generally have the authority to levy service charges, fees, or assessments to pay for the mandated program or level of service, so resultant costs are likely non-reimbursable by the state.”

**SUPPORT:** (Verified 8/29/25)

California Legislative Central Coast Caucus  
California Professional Firefighters  
County of Ventura  
Sierra Club

**OPPOSITION:** (Verified 8/29/25)

Association of California Water Agencies  
California Council for Environmental & Economic Balance  
California Department of Finance  
California Water Association  
Casitas Municipal Water District  
City of Burbank/Burbank Redevelopment Agency  
City of Camarillo  
City of Fillmore  
City of Simi Valley  
City of Thousand Oaks  
Eastern Municipal Water District  
Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District  
Fillmore Professional Firefighters Assoc.  
Las Virgenes - Triunfo Joint Powers Authority  
Public Water Agencies Group  
San Gabriel Valley Water Association

**ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT:** According to the author, “California’s wildfire destruction has reached a tipping point. Ventura County has experienced its three most destructive fires in the last 8 years - Thomas (2017), Woolsey (2018), and Mountain (2024). While our water systems and hydrants are not designed to battle hundreds of homes fully engulfed in fire, they should perform to their maximum capacity during wildfire events. During Ventura County’s three destructive fires, there have been instances where tanks were not filled appropriately, backup power to run water pumps was not available, and water pumps were destroyed by fire. Filling tanks, ensuring backup power and hardening water pumps are relatively modest investments. AB 367 ensures that Ventura will be able to use its resources to their maximum effectiveness.”

**ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION:** According to the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA), this bill “is overly directive toward water system operations, could potentially subject water agencies to legal liability, and since the provisions of the bill are unfunded, would lead to significant costs for water agencies to comply.” According to their letter, “a backup generator can cost upwards of \$500,000 and additional upgrades to facilities for stationary generators can be even more costly.” These costs will “ultimately be borne by the ratepayers through an increase to water rates.” ACWA is also concerned about the potential liability for water agencies.

**ASSEMBLY FLOOR:** 75-1, 6/2/25

**AYES:** Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Fariás, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Connolly, Davies, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

**NOES:** DeMaio

**NO VOTE RECORDED:** Chen, Sanchez, Tangipa

Prepared by: Genevieve Wong / N.R. & W. / (916) 651-4116  
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