
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Anna Caballero, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

AB 478 (Zbur) - Accessibility to emergency information and services: evacuations: pets

Version: July 16, 2025

Policy Vote: G.O. 14 - 0, B., P. & E.D. 11
- 0

Urgency: No

Mandate: Yes

Hearing Date: August 18, 2025

Consultant: Janelle Miyashiro

Bill Summary: AB 478 requires a city or county, upon the next update to its emergency plan, to designate procedures for the rescue of household pets from areas subject to an evacuation order. AB 478 also prohibits household pets rescued from an evacuated area from being adopted out, euthanized, or transferred from a local animal control agency's or its in-state partner animal shelters' custody for 30 days, as specified.

Fiscal Impact:

- The Office of Emergency Services (OES) reports annual ongoing General Fund cost pressures of approximately \$668,000 and three Emergency Services Coordinators to support each OES administrative response region (Inland, Coastal, and Southern). OES notes that regional staff are already responsible for coordinating animal-related resources; however, this bill will expand those duties. OES will need to deploy additional personnel to support animal needs and resource requests.
- Unknown, potentially significant reimbursable mandate costs (General Fund). The bill, among other things, requires cities and counties to update emergency plans with procedures for pet rescues and to designate a person or entity to coordinate information on or assistance with pet rescues, as well as imposes pet retention requirements on local animal control agencies, which may impact these agencies' operating capacity. To the extent the Commission on State Mandates determines that any of these provisions create a new program or impose a higher level of service on local agencies, local agencies could claim reimbursement of those costs.

Background: AB 450 (Yee, Chapter 604, Statutes of 2005) required OES to approve, adopt, and incorporate the "California Animal Response Emergency System" (CARES) program into the standardized emergency management system. As a result of AB 450, the CARES Unit resides within the Emergency Preparedness and Response Section of the Animal Health Branch in the Animal Health and Food Safety Services Division of the Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA). That bill required no later than January 31, 2007, the CDFA enter into a memorandum of understanding with the OES and other interested parties to incorporate the CARES program into their emergency planning.

As noted in the CARES Concept of Operations, 2024 Executive Summary, "In emergencies and disasters, there are usually a number of displaced or unclaimed animals in temporary emergency animal shelters, municipal shelters, fairgrounds or in foster homes waiting to be claimed." This bill aims to help with reunification by ensuring

that animals cannot be adopted out or euthanized if they are from an emergency evacuation area.

Proposed Law:

- Upon the next update of a city's or county's emergency plan, requires a city or county to update its plan to designate procedures for at least one of the following to be able to rescue a pet from an area subject to an evacuation order, subject to approval by the incident commander or emergency management authority, that at the time of the evacuation the pet's owner believed to be alive:
 - A person with a residence in an area subject to an evacuation order, provided that person is operating under the supervision of the incident command system.
 - A designated representative of a person with a residence in an area subject to an evacuation order, provided that representative is operating under the supervision of the incident command system.
 - A person or entity with animal rescue experience designated by the city or county.
- Requires the procedures to establish timelines or conditions in which rescues can occur as safely as possible.
- Authorizes a city or county to require a person with a residence in an area subject to an evacuation order or their designated representative to sign a liability waiver releasing the city or county from any liabilities or claims related to the person's return to the residence in accordance with the procedures.
- Provides nothing in the procedures grants any person the absolute right to reenter an evacuation zone, and specifies all reentry is subject to incident conditions and approval by the designated incident commander or emergency management authority.
- Requires a city or county to update its emergency plan to designate a person or entity for a person with a residence in an area subject to an evacuation order or their designated representative to call if the person is in need of information regarding, or assistance with, evacuating pets during an evacuation; or if the person's pet was left in an area subject to an evacuation order and the person is in need of assistance retrieving that pet.
 - Requires a city or county to make the contact information for the person designated to assist with pets during and after evacuations available on its internet website. Also requires a city or county to post Resources for persons who need assistance reuniting with pets rescued from areas subject to evacuation orders, including a list of animals rescued from the evacuated areas that is linked on the home page of the city's or county's internet website.
- Prohibits a pet rescued or originating from an area subject to an evacuation order, that would otherwise be eligible for adoption from being made available for adoption, euthanized, or transferred out of the custody of the local animal control agency or its

in-state partner animal shelters, animal rescues, or animal fosters for at least 30 days.

- After the 30-day period has passed, prohibits a pet from being euthanized or transferred out of the custody of the local animal control agency unless all local rescue and foster partners have been notified and given an opportunity to take custody of the pet. Provides that this prohibition does not apply to a pet that is irremediably suffering, or a pet that was relinquished or surrendered by its owner.
- Authorizes a local animal control agency to transfer a pet to an in-state partner animal shelter, animal rescue, or animal foster during the 30-day period if the local animal control agency maintains records of the location of the pet in order to facilitate owner reunification.
- Defines “pet” to mean an animal, including a dog, cat, rabbit, rodent, reptile, amphibian, fish, bird, or other species of animal, kept for the purpose of being a household pet.
- States legislative findings and declarations.

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