

CONCURRENCE IN SENATE AMENDMENTS

CSA1 Bill Id:AB 478 Author:(Zbur)

As Amended Ver:September 5, 2025

Majority vote

SUMMARY

Requires a city or county, upon the next update to its emergency plan, to designate procedures, and post resources to its website, regarding the rescue of household pets from areas subject to an evacuation order; and prohibits household pets rescued from an evacuated area from adoption, euthanasia, or transfer from local animal control custody for 30 days, except as specified.

Senate Amendments

- 1) Strike requirements that a city or county's emergency plan designate procedures for a person, representative, or entity to be able to rescue a pet from an area subject to an evacuation order, to instead require a city or county's emergency plan to designate procedures for the rescue of a pet from an area subject to an evacuation order.
- 2) Clarifies no person is granted the absolute right to enter an evacuation zone to rescue a pet.
- 3) Require all reentry for the purposes of rescuing a pet be subject to incident conditions and approval by an incident manager in coordination with the emergency management authority.
- 4) Strike the requirement that a city or county's emergency plan designate a person to assist with evacuating pets during an emergency evacuation to instead require the emergency plan designates a representative to call for information regarding pet evacuations.
- 5) Requires multimodal methods of providing information regarding pet rescues and resources, as specified, on the city or county's internet website.
- 6) Specify a local animal control agency may 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.
- 7) Specify that after the 30-day period, a rescued pet may not be euthanized if an animal rescue organization has previously notified the local animal control agency of their willingness to take custody of the pet and completes that transfer upon the conclusion of the 30-day period.
- 8) Specify the adoption, euthanasia, and transfer requirements do not apply to a pet relinquished or surrendered by its owner.
- 9) Strike "state or local emergency" from the definition of evacuation order to instead replace with "declared federal or state emergency"
- 10) Make conforming changes.

COMMENTS

Failure to Evacuate Because of Pets: According to a study from the American Journal of Epidemiology, the risk of evacuation failure in all households was significantly higher in

households with an increasing number of dogs or cats. Individuals who do not heed evacuation orders risk injury or death while placing first responders at greater risk. Additionally, when individuals leave pets behind, they are more likely to return before an evacuation order is lifted or develop traumatic responses to abandoning their pets. In September, 2021, the ASPCA released a survey which found that "while more than 90% of pet owners plan to bring their pet with them during an evacuation, only 16% have emergency pet-friendly housing secured, and only 46% have a preparedness plan in place." Furthermore, roughly 80% of people who prematurely reenter an evacuation site are attempting to rescue their pets.

Pet Ownership in California: Confirming the exact amount of pets in California at any given time is a difficult task. The Department of Food and Agriculture offers formulas through their Pet Ownership Calculator, which enables an estimate for the number of households owning a pet based on national percentages. Based on these formulas, 57% of all households own at least one pet. Within all households with at least one pet, approximately 38% own at least one dog, 25% own at least one cat, and 3% own a pet bird. Applying these formulas to United States Census data, which states California has 13,699,816 households, approximately 7,808,895 households in the state own a pet.

California Animal Response Emergency System: In 2006, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger signed AB 450 (Yee), which mandated that the California Animal Response Emergency System (CARES) be incorporated into the State Emergency Plan, and that CDFA and Cal OES enter into a Memorandum of Understanding that would require them to incorporate CARES into all levels of the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS.) The California Emergency Services Act, Section 8608, includes direction on implementation and authorities of the CARES program.

CARES provides operational guidance to assist with all aspects of animal care and control in the all four phases of a disaster. In the mitigation and preparedness phases, the CARES Unit will assist local government with planning and preparing for animals in disasters. In the response and recovery phases, the CARES system, as one of the core functions of the California Emergency Support Function (ESF) 11, will primarily assist and support the CA-ESF 11 Coordinator in carrying out the responsibilities of the position in response operations. CDFA leads CA-ESF 11 and is supported by other State agencies and stakeholders with similar discipline-specific responsibilities. CA-ESF 11 is responsible for the management and oversight based on its authorities, resources, and capabilities as outlined in the State Emergency Plan (SEP). In addition, CARES provides resources for the public, for animal businesses, for shelters, and for emergency planners. CARES is structured in accordance with the SEMS and the Incident Command System (ICS).

Pets Evacuation and Transportation Standards (PETS) Act: In 2006, Congress passed the PETS Act. This act:

- 1) Requires the FEMA Director to ensure that state and local emergency plans address the needs of persons with household pets and service animals before, during, and after an emergency.
- 2) Authorizes the FEMA Director to:
 - a. Study and develop plans accounting for the needs of persons with pets and service animals; and

- b. Contribute project and program funds to state and local governments for animal emergency preparedness purposes, such as the procurement, construction, leasing, or renovating of emergency shelter facilities to accommodate people, pets, and service animals.
- 3) Authorizes federal agencies, during an emergency, to provide rescue, care, shelter, and essential needs to persons with household pets and service animals.

According to the Author

"Pets are more than just property—they are family. When disaster strikes, no one should have to choose between their safety and their pet's survival. The FOUND Act ensures that local governments have clear rescue plans in place, so pet owners don't have to risk their lives to save their animals. While we've seen incredible examples of fire and safety officials working alongside the public to reunite pets with their families, as well as the extraordinary efforts of local animal shelters and rescuers, we owe it to pet owners across California to ensure that every city and county has a plan in place before disaster strikes."

Arguments in Support

According to Social Compassion in Legislation (Bill Sponsor), "During the recent fires in Southern California, jurisdictions lacked a coordinated procedure or central authority to facilitate animal rescues. As a result, volunteers and rescue groups responded to pet owners' pleas for help, often entering fire zones through unofficial channels. This not only created a distressing situation for both pets and their devoted guardians but also placed an additional burden on first responders and government officials, who must manage frustrated and desperate pet owners and advocates. By directing cities and counties to develop procedures and establish communication hubs for residents needing to rescue their pets during evacuations, AB 478 lays the foundation for a more organized and professional approach to pet rescue. The bill affords local jurisdictions the flexibility to tailor procedures according to their specific needs and capacities, as well as adapt implementation based on the type of emergency. Furthermore, by requiring a dedicated page for found animals, the bill helps ensure that lost pets can be reunited with their families as quickly as possible."

Arguments in Opposition

According to the Riverside County Sheriff's Office, "Our experience developing Riverside County's Agricultural Pass Program under AB 1108 (2021) demonstrates the true fiscal impact of such mandates. That program alone took over a year to develop, cost the county in excess of \$150,000, and consumed hundreds of personnel hours..."

They continue, "Though AB 478 focuses on pets rather than livestock, the scope, infrastructure, and personnel demands mirror AB 1108's burdens almost identically. Cities and counties would again be forced to draft new ordinances, incurring thousands of dollars in legal and administrative costs, conduct multiple stakeholder meetings, develop new protocols, provide personnel training, and conduct public outreach. These obligations are neither minor nor cheap. Yet AB 478 provides no funding whatsoever... Riverside County's public safety budget has no surplus to absorb these duplicative mandates, and we have no reason to believe the state will reimburse us."

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Senate Committee on Appropriations:

- 1) 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.
- 2) Unknown, potentially significant reimbursable mandate costs (General Fund). 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.

VOTES:

ASM EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT: 7-0-0

YES: Ransom, Hadwick, Arambula, Bains, Bennett, Calderon, DeMaio

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 11-0-4

YES: Wicks, Arambula, Calderon, Caloza, Elhawary, Fong, Mark González, Hart, Pacheco, Pellerin, Solache

ABS, ABST OR NV: Sanchez, Dixon, Ta, Tangipa

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 78-0-1

YES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Chen, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, 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, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

ABS, ABST OR NV: Bennett

UPDATED

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CONSULTANT: Ryan Fleming / E.M. / (916) 319-3802

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