

Date of Hearing: May 21, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 591 (Caloza) – As Introduced February 12, 2025

Policy Committee: Emergency Management

Vote: 7 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: Yes

Reimbursable: Yes

SUMMARY:

This bill requires the Office of Emergency Services (OES) to develop and adopt a Public Works Emergency Mutual Aid Plan (Plan) to ensure the systematic and efficient mobilization of public works resources during emergencies.

Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Adds to the findings and declarations of the California Emergency Services Act (CESA) that facilitating the rendering of public works resources critical for disaster response and recovery is part of CESA's purpose to facilitate the rendering of aid to areas stricken by an emergency.
- 2) Provides that outside aid rendered in accordance with an approved emergency plan during a state of war emergency or state of emergency includes public works personnel, equipment, and materials.
- 3) Requires OES, in consultation with local and state public works agencies, to develop and adopt a Plan to ensure the systematic and efficient mobilization of public works resources during emergencies.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) Costs of approximately \$2.5 million in the first year and ongoing costs of approximately \$1 million annually thereafter to OES to support a state Public Works Mutual Aid Agreement. OES notes it will need to work through its Standardized Emergency Management System Committee to develop the proposed mutual aid program, necessitating three additional staff positions (one program manager and two senior coordinators), a \$1.8 million information technology (IT) service contract, and \$200,000 in IT funds to build out and support expanded use of the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) in the first year, after which OES will need two positions (one associate analyst and one staff assistant) and continued IT funds for ongoing program administration and tracking.

Separately, OES anticipates needing a contract, at an initial cost of \$500,000 and an ongoing cost of \$100,000, to consult with subject matter experts to develop curriculum and create online courses through California Specialized Training Institute Learning Management System, so public works personnel are trained to assist with disaster response.

- 2) Costs of an unknown amount across local public works agencies to consult with OES on the Plan and across cities and counties to update their existing emergency plans to include public

works mutual aid. 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 local agencies (General Fund). Cities and counties will also incur cost pressures of an unknown amount to execute the updated plans in response to an emergency.

COMMENTS:

1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

Currently there is no coordinated approach to mobilize public works when disasters strike. As we recently witnessed during the Eaton and Palisades fires, having mutual aid agreements in place like we did for firefighters, saves lives and livelihoods. We need to expand the scope of our mutual aid agreements to include public works personnel who are essential workers during the disaster recovery period. AB 591 closes that gap.

This bill is supported by the City of Glendale Department of Public Works.

- 2) **Mutual Aid.** California provides and receives mutual aid from other states through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact, a national interstate mutual aid agreement that enables states to share resources, including personnel, equipment, and commodities, during times of disaster. Additionally, the Master Mutual Aid Agreement exists between the State of California, the state's various departments and agencies, and various political subdivisions, municipal corporations, and public agencies. This bill requires OES to develop and adopt a Plan to ensure the systematic and efficient mobilization of public works resources during emergencies.
- 3) **Prior Legislation.** AB 2594 (Committee on Emergency Management), of the 2023-24 Legislative Session, would have required OES to prepare a gap analysis of the state's mutual aid systems every two years. AB 2594 was held on this committee's suspense file.

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