
THIRD READING

Bill No: AB 818
Author: Ávila Farías (D), et al.
Amended: 7/17/25 in Senate
Vote: 21

SENATE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE: 7-0, 7/2/25
AYES: Durazo, Choi, Arreguín, Cabaldon, Laird, Seyarto, Wiener

SENATE HOUSING COMMITTEE: 10-0, 7/15/25
AYES: Wahab, Seyarto, Arreguín, Caballero, Cortese, Durazo, Gonzalez,
Grayson, Ochoa Bogh, Padilla
NO VOTE RECORDED: Cabaldon

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: Senate Rule 28.8

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 71-0, 5/23/25 (Consent) - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: Permit Streamlining Act: local emergencies

SOURCE: Author

DIGEST: This bill requires local agencies and utility providers to expedite certain aspects of the approval process and waives specified green energy standards for residential developments on properties that were destroyed in a disaster.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Authorizes the State Energy Resources Conservation and Development Commission (CEC) to prescribe, by regulation, lighting, insulation, climate control system, and other building design and construction standards that increase efficiency in the use of energy and water for new residential and new nonresidential buildings, and energy and water conservation design standards

for new residential and new nonresidential buildings. Under this authority, the CEC has established regulations for the installation of photovoltaic systems meeting certain requirements for low-rise residential buildings built on or after January 1, 2020.

- 2) Authorizes, via the California Emergency Services Act, the Governor to declare a state of emergency, and local officials and local governments to declare a local emergency, when specified conditions of disaster or extreme peril to the safety of persons and property exist.
- 3) Establishes the Permit Streamlining Act, which, among other things, establishes time limits within which state and local government agencies must either approve or disapprove permits to entitle a development.
- 4) Establishes standards and requirements for local agencies to review non-discretionary post-entitlement phase permits, including time limits within which local agencies must either approve or disapprove these permits.
- 5) Establishes the Powering Up Californians Act which requires the CPUC, on or before September 30, 2024, to establish reasonable average and maximum target energization time periods, as defined, and a procedure for customers to report energization delays to the commission, as provided. Requires the CPUC to require the electrical corporation to take remedial actions necessary to achieve the commission's targets and requires all reports to be publicly available.

This bill:

- 1) Defines the following terms:
 - a) "Affected property" means a residential real property that satisfies any of the following conditions:
 - i) The property was destroyed by a disaster that resulted in a declared local emergency.
 - ii) The property was rendered a substandard building as a result of a disaster that resulted in a declared local emergency.
 - b) "Disaster" means a fire, flood, storm, tidal wave, earthquake, terrorism, epidemic, or other similar public calamity that the Governor determines presents a threat to public safety.

- c) “Local agency” means a county, city, or city and county.
 - d) “Local emergency” means a condition of extreme peril to persons or property proclaimed as such by the governing body of the local agency, as specified.
 - e) “Substandard building” means a building, or portion thereof, including any building used for human habitation that is declared substandard, as specified.
 - f) “Utility provider” means an entity that provides a utility service connection and that is subject to the Mitigation Fee Act
- 2) Provides that requirements for solar panel installations and associated energy storage systems established in the California Building Standards Code do not apply to an application for a permit necessary to rebuild or repair a property that was destroyed or rendered substandard in a disaster that resulted in a declared local emergency.
 - 3) Requires a utility provider to provide a written notice describing the next steps in the approval process for a connection request for the project within 30 days of receipt of a connection request for a project with an approved local agency permit to rebuild or repair an affected property, as specified.
 - 4) Requires a local agency to approve or deny an application for a building permit within 10 business days for a modular home, a prefabricated home, an accessory dwelling unit (ADU) that is intended to be used by a person until the rebuilding or repairing of their affected property is complete.
 - 5) Requires local agencies to update the following on their internet website every four years, starting March 31, 2028, with information regarding:
 - a) The requirements included in this bill.
 - b) The conditions that result in a property being deemed substandard.
 - c) A notification of a person’s right to obtain a confidential third-party code inspection of their property.
 - d) A dashboard that tracks permitting timelines and agency performance.

Background

2025 Los Angeles fires. In early January 2025, extremely dry conditions and high winds in Los Angeles resulted in two of the most destructive wildfires in state history. The Palisades fire, which started on January 7th, burned a total of 23,448 acres and damaged or destroyed almost 8,000 structures in the Pacific Palisades and Topanga State Park area of west Los Angeles. That same day, other fires also broke out in the greater Los Angeles area: the Eaton and Hughes fires. The Eaton fire consumed 14,021 acres and damaged or destroyed more than 10,000 structures, including significant portions of the unincorporated community of Altadena. The fires destroyed about half of all properties in both Palisades and Altadena and caused the deaths of 30 people.

Real estate losses have been estimated to be as high as \$30 billion, and just under 13,000 households were displaced by the Palisades and Eaton fires. An estimated 9,592 single family homes and condominiums, 678 apartment units, 2,210 duplex and bungalow courts, and 373 mobilehomes were either heavily damaged or destroyed.

Governor Newsom declared a state of emergency the day the fires started, put into place protections against price gouging, and issued an executive order prohibiting landlords in Los Angeles from evicting tenants for violating their leases by providing shelter in their unit for residents displaced by the fires. The Governor also issued executive orders aimed at promoting and streamlining the construction of temporary shelters and the rebuilding of structures destroyed by the fires.

Rebuilding temporary and permanent housing after disaster. State and local agencies have taken numerous steps to reduce barriers to rebuilding in the areas burned in the Palisades and Eaton fires. Among those steps have been to expedite the process of building or siting temporary housing for residents that lost their homes while they are recovering from the fire and waiting to rebuild permanent structures. Among others, both the City of Los Angeles and the County of Los Angeles have established expedited procedures for approving temporary housing in the form of manufactured homes, mobilehomes, or RVs on lots that contained dwellings destroyed or severely damaged by the wildfires.

Both the city and the county have also expedited rebuilds—regardless of whether they meet current zoning codes—of “like-for-like” rebuilds of permanent housing: housing built to no more than 110% of the original dwelling size in substantially the same location on the property. While local agencies can waive their zoning codes, structures must generally be rebuilt to current zoning codes.

Property owners seeking to rebuild after a disaster also must receive service from various utilities, including electric utilities. SB 410 (Becker, Chapter 394, Statutes of 2023) and AB 50 (Wood, Chapter 317, Statutes of 2023), directed the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), which regulates investor-owned utilities, to define reasonable energization times for new or upgraded electrical loads and establish a process for reporting delays. On September 12, 2024, the CPUC approved decision D.24.09.020, which established average and maximum timelines for utilities, including a maximum of 45 days to approve or deny an application for energization and nearly one year (306 to 357 days, depending on the type of service) to complete the energization. Special districts that provide services, including electrical service, are subject to different requirements: if they receive an application for service to a housing project, they must respond within 30 business days for projects of 25 units or fewer, and 60 business days for larger projects, and indicate any needed additional information AB 281 (Grayson, Chapter 735, Statutes of 2023).

Since January 1, 2020, the building code has required new construction, including single family homes, to include solar photovoltaic systems (solar panels) that are designed to offset the electrical consumption of the proposed building. However, AB 178 (Dahle, Chapter 259, Statutes of 2019) exempted, until January 1, 2023, residential construction from complying with the solar requirements in the recently adopted building standards when the construction is in response to a disaster in an area in which a state of emergency has been proclaimed by the Governor if certain requirements are met.

The author wants to ease the process of rebuilding after a disaster.

Comments

Purpose of this bill. According to the author, “Even when the last of the flames have been extinguished, for families who tragically lost their homes, the road to recovery and rebuilding may seem endless. As current law does not outline specific or streamlined permit processes for residential properties affected by natural disasters, communities rebuilding their pre-existing properties can face extensive regulatory, administrative and financial challenges.

“AB 818 takes lessons learned from past response efforts and provides ‘off the shelf’ guidance to policy makers and homeowners to restore their communities. It outlines specific procedures for municipal staff to implement, with the help of the California Department of Housing & Community Development, to expedite permits and inspections, use fire-resistant and energy-efficient materials, and flexibility to rebuild previously unpermitted structures. While we cannot give back

what the homeowner has lost, we can help them rebuild a home that's even better and do it more expediently.”

Is it needed? State and local agencies spring into action after a disaster. In the case of the Los Angeles fires, the Governor, the City of Los Angeles, and the County of Los Angeles adopted policies to pave the way for rapid approvals of temporary housing. AB 818 codifies some of these policies. Having these policies in place for future disasters may expedite approvals of temporary housing. On the other hand, local governments experiencing disasters have first-hand knowledge of the policies that will be most helpful to their constituents based on local conditions and the nature of the specific disaster. They can also act more quickly than the state. AB 818 requires local governments to take specified steps, which may differ from the priorities of local governments that are closer to the disaster. Will AB 818 will help or hinder local recovery efforts?

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

SUPPORT: (Verified 8/19/25)

Abundant Housing LA
California Apartment Association
California Association of Realtors
California Business Properties Association
California Yimby
Cdp Rural Caucus
Circulate San Diego
East Bay Yimby
Eden Housing
Greater Conejo Valley Chamber of Commerce
Grow the Richmond
Housing Action Coalition
Housing Trust Silicon Valley
Inner City Law Center
Institute for Responsive Government Action
Midpen Housing
Mountain View Yimby
Napa-solano for Everyone
Northern Neighbors
Peninsula for Everyone
San Francisco Yimby
Santa Cruz Yimby

Santa Rosa Yimby
Sloco Yimby
Sola Impact
South Bay Yimby
Southern California Obtainable Housing
Spur
Ventura County Yimby
Yimby Action
Yimby Los Angeles

OPPOSITION: (Verified 8/19/25)

Livable California

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 71-0, 5/23/25

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, 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, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Schiavo, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

NO VOTE RECORDED: Bryan, Chen, Ellis, Nguyen, Sanchez, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Wicks

Prepared by: Anton Favorini-Csorba / L. GOV. / (916) 651-4119
8/20/25 23:22:47

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