
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Anna Caballero, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

AB 841 (Patel) - State Fire Marshal: personal protective equipment: battery fires

Version: July 1, 2025

Urgency: No

Hearing Date: August 18, 2025

Policy Vote: G.O. 15 - 0

Mandate: No

Consultant: Janelle Miyashiro

Bill Summary: AB 841 requires the State Fire Marshal (SFM), in consultation with the Division of Occupational Safety and Health (OSHA), to develop a working group to make recommendations regarding personal protective equipment (PPE) used in responding to lithium-ion battery fires, as specified.

Fiscal Impact:

- The Department of Industrial Relations notes costs of approximately \$169,000 in the first year and \$157,000 ongoing to consult with the SFM and participate in the working group (Occupational Safety and Health Fund).
- The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection anticipates the fiscal impact to convene the working group to be absorbable.

Background: One of the primary risks related to lithium-ion batteries is thermal runaway. Thermal runaway is a phenomenon in which the lithium-ion cell enters an uncontrollable, self-heating state. Thermal runaway can result in extremely high temperatures, violent cell venting, smoke, and fire. Faults in a lithium-ion cell can result in a thermal runaway, and these faults can be caused by internal failure or external conditions. Lithium-ion battery fires and explosions are triggered by the thermal runaway reactions inside the cell and, when stored near or next to another battery or batteries, can set off a chain reaction, making an already tough fire to fight even worse. When they reach thermal runaway, lithium-ion battery fires can burn for hours or even days, until all the flammable chemicals in the battery have been consumed by the combustion reaction.

Proposed Law:

- Requires the SFM, in consultation with OSHA, to develop a working group to make recommendations regarding personal protective equipment (PPE) used in responding to lithium-ion battery fires.
 - Requires the working group to include members of the State Board of Fire Services, academia, health and safety experts, and a labor organization representing the utility workforce.
 - Requires the working group to review PPE to limit exposure to lithium and heavy metals when responding to fires when lithium-ion battery fires are present; technology to clean PPE after response to lithium-ion battery fires; whether different types of PPE should be used for different types of lithium-ion battery fires; and current decontamination practices.

- Requires the working group's recommendations to be delivered to the Legislature by September 1, 2026.
- States legislative findings and declarations.
- Sunsets the working group's reporting requirements on January 1, 2030.

Related Legislation: AB 1285 (Committee on Emergency Management, 2025) requires the SFM to develop fire prevention, response, and recovery measures for utility grade lithium-ion battery storage facilities that include best practices for the health and safety of emergency services personnel and timely and accurate information sharing with local emergency managers and public safety agencies regarding incidents. AB 1285 is pending in this committee.

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