

Date of Hearing: May 14, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 855 (Lackey) – As Amended March 4, 2025

Policy Committee: Emergency Management

Vote: 7 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: No

Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill requires the Office of Emergency Services (OES) to develop and post online an action plan for responding to electric commercial motor vehicle battery fires.

Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Requires, by January 1, 2027, OES to develop and post online an action plan for responding to electric commercial motor vehicle battery fires. The plan must cover certain topics, including best practices for reducing wildfire risk and mitigating the risk of battery re-ignition.
- 2) Requires OES to consult with specified stakeholders, including the Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM), California Highway Patrol (CHP), and Department of Transportation (Caltrans), to develop the plan.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) Costs of an unknown amount, likely in excess of \$150,000, to OES to develop the detailed action plan (General Fund). Regardless, since the primary purpose of this bill is to create an action plan, which is akin to a report, this bill qualifies for this committee's suspense file consistent with committee rules.
- 2) Likely absorbable costs to OSFM, CHP, and Caltrans to consult with OES on the plan.

COMMENTS:

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

As California leads the way in transitioning to electric vehicles, we have a responsibility to make sure safety measures evolve just as quickly. This bill ensures that first responders, drivers, and communities are protected from the serious risks posed by battery fires, while keeping our roads, economy, and drivers moving safely.

This bill is supported by the California Association of Environmental Health Administrators and transportation groups.

- 2) **Lithium-ion Battery Fires.** One of the primary risks related to lithium-ion batteries, which are increasingly common in portable electronic devices and electrified transportation, is thermal runaway. Thermal runaway is a phenomenon where the lithium-ion cell enters an uncontrollable, self-heating state, which can result in extremely high temperatures, violent cell venting, smoke, and fire. A lithium-ion battery fire can burn for hours, or even days, until all the flammable chemicals in the battery are consumed by the combustion reaction. This bill requires OES to develop and post online an action plan for responding to electric commercial motor vehicle battery fires.
- 3) **Related Legislation.** AB 588 (Patel) requires the OSFM to convene a lithium battery working group to identify safety issues and recommend solutions associated with certain lithium batteries and associated charging infrastructure. AB 588 is pending on this committee's suspense file.

AB 696 (Ransom) requires the Secretary for Environmental Protection to convene an advisory group to advise the Legislature on policies pertaining to the safety and management of lithium-ion vehicle batteries involved in an emergency situation. AB 696 is pending on this committee's suspense file.

AB 841 (Patel) requires the OSFM to develop a working group to make recommendations regarding personal protective equipment used when responding to a lithium-ion battery fire. AB 841 is pending on this committee's suspense file.

AB 1285 (Committee on Emergency Management) requires the OSFM to consult with OES to develop fire prevention, response, and recovery measures for utility-grade lithium-ion battery storage facilities. AB 1285 is pending on this committee's suspense file.

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