
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Senator Henry Stern

Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No: SB 1001 **Hearing Date:** 3/24/2026
Author: Archuleta
Version: 3/17/2026 Amended
Urgency: No **Fiscal:** Yes
Consultant: Cassie Royce

SUBJECT: Local agency, corporation, or mutual water company: personnel access: Personal Identity Verification-Interoperable

SUMMARY: Requires, beginning on July 1, 2028, the Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) to issue, upon request, a specified identity verification credential to specified public works and critical infrastructure personnel to facilitate access to an emergency area.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Designates the California Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) under the California Emergency Services Act (ESA) as the lead state agency responsible for state emergency response to natural, technological, or man-made disasters, as specified.
- 2) Requires all state agencies to use the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) for emergency and disaster response involving multiple jurisdictions or agencies and directs local agencies to use it to be eligible for state funding of personnel costs related to emergencies and disasters.
- 3) Specifies that the basic components of the SEMS framework are the Incident Command System (ICS), multi-agency or inter-agency coordination, operational areas, and the mutual aid system.
- 4) Permits, in the event a menace to public health or safety is created by a calamity, such as a flood, storm, fire, earthquake, explosion, accident, or other disaster, specified law enforcement and public safety officers to close the area where the menace exists, and the immediate area surrounding any activated command post, for the duration of the event to any and all unauthorized

persons, as specified.

- 5) Provides that specified individuals, including duly authorized media representatives and valid livestock pass document-holders, shall not be prevented from entering the closed area unless the authorizing officer determines that entry is unsafe or their presence would interfere with disaster response.
- 6) Makes any unauthorized person who willfully and knowingly enters such a closed area and who willfully remains within the area after receiving notice to evacuate or leave guilty of a misdemeanor.

This bill:

- 1) Makes various findings and declarations for purposes of this bill, including the following:
 - a) Electrical, natural gas, water, and wastewater systems represent critical infrastructure that is vulnerable to a wide range of natural and man-made disasters; and,
 - b) The use of a common approach for managing access and phased reentry into evacuation zones is particularly important to the coordination of public and private sector response and recovery assets and restoration of critical infrastructure and essential public services.
- 2) Requires Cal OES, beginning on July 1, 2028, to issue, upon request, a Personal Identity Verification-Interoperable (PIV-I) a credential to personnel of a local agency, corporation, or mutual water company responsible for public works and critical infrastructure to facilitate access to an emergency area, as specified.
- 3) Directs Cal OES to prepare and make available by July 1, 2028, an application for a local agency, corporation, or mutual water company to request that an individual be issued a PIV-I credential that conforms with specified federal standards and guidelines. Requires a PIV-I card to be provided upon receipt of the signed application that includes a specified verification statement.
- 4) Provides that only the incident commander, or the designated law enforcement official having jurisdiction over the closed area, shall grant access to an individual issued a PIV-I card and requires the incident commander to be notified if access is granted by other emergency response personnel.

- 5) Specifies that a PIV-I card shall be valid for five years from the date of issuance and renewable upon submission of a renewal application.
- 6) Makes a local agency, corporation, or mutual water company responsible for handling a PIV-I card if the cardholder ceases employment or their job duties change, as specified.
- 7) Authorizes Cal OES to charge a fee for the PIV-I card program provided the amount does not exceed the reasonable costs of operating the program.
- 8) Provides that an individual who holds a valid PIV-I card shall only be denied access to a closed area if the authorizing officer determines that entry is unsafe or the presence of the cardholder would interfere with disaster response.

Background

Author's statement. According to the author's office, "In many emergency situations, public works infrastructure is damaged or cut off. In those cases, utility worker access is essential to maintaining or restoring systems like electricity, gas, and water service. Unfortunately, our current emergency response system does not make it easy for these essential workers to gain the access they need.

By mirroring existing access laws and safety protections for journalists and agricultural workers, SB 1001 takes a rational approach that puts safety and emergency response first [and] establishes now, before the next disaster, a credentialing system to ease utility workers' abilities to continue their essential work behind the lines of evacuation zones. Standardizing access to emergency areas will allow for essential workers across the state to maintain infrastructure and assist in disaster response steps quicker and hours earlier than their current ability."

Standardized Emergency Management System. SEMS is the state framework used to standardize emergency response involving multiple jurisdictions or agencies to ensure response activities are performed rapidly and effectively during the incident. According to Cal OES, SEMS uses the ICS to provide the on-scene emergency management structure needed to respond to the complexity and demands of single or multiple incidents without being hindered by jurisdictional boundaries. ICS is the combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications operating within a common organizational structure that is responsible for managing resources effectively. The federal government uses a similar framework to SEMS known as the National Incident Management System (NIMS).

Federal Personal Identity Verification (PIV) standards. Each federal agency with responsibilities under NIMS is required to ensure that incident management personnel, emergency response providers, and other personnel needed to respond to a natural disaster, act of terrorism, or other manmade disaster are credentialed pursuant to the NIMS Guideline for the Credentialing of Personnel published in 2011. In compliance with this directive, the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) published standards in 2022 for a PIV system that meets the control and security objectives of the NIMS Guideline.

According to the NIST, the PIV standards are based on secure and reliable forms of identity credentials issued by the federal government to its employees and contractors. These credentials are used to authenticate individuals who require access to federally controlled facilities, information systems, and applications. The standards address requirements for initial identity proofing, infrastructure to support interoperability of identity credentials, and accreditation of organizations and processes issuing PIV credentials. These standards ensure secure, interoperable physical and logistical access to government facilities and information systems via authenticated, smart-card-based credentials.

The PIV-I cards issued pursuant to the program in this bill would be required to conform to these federal standards. Cal OES would be required to develop an application process and begin issuing PIV-I cards upon request by July 1, 2028, and may charge a reasonable fee to support the program.

Emergency area access challenges for utility personnel. According to the Hurricane Sandy After-Action Report published by the American Water Works Association in 2013, many utilities have worked with their local, state and federal emergency response partners and with critical customers to ensure awareness of the critical nature of public health and safety activities, such as firefighting assistance and the provision of safe drinking water, exists. However, the report noted that, in some cases, there was limited recognition that drinking water and wastewater utilities represent a critical lifeline sector essential to community continuity and recovery. This resulted in difficulties for utility personnel trying to access their facilities to assess and/or repair damage.

The Paradise Irrigation District (PID), which serves a community that has experienced catastrophic wildfires, reports that during the 2018 Camp Fire incident, PID personnel experienced significant challenges accessing the disaster area, specifically during the initial response and early recovery phases. Roadblocks were staffed by multiple agencies whose personnel were unfamiliar with PID staff, utility roles, and the critical need for water system access. As a result, PID employees and other utility personnel encountered delays and, in some cases, were

denied access to restricted areas, which, in turn, slowed system restoration, damage assessments, emergency repairs, and coordination with firefighting and emergency response efforts. Other water utilities, including Rowland Water District in the author's district, report experiencing similar frustrations, particularly during mutual aid operations in response to the January 2025 Eaton Fire in Los Angeles County.

Authorization access to a disaster area. Under current law in Penal Code Section 409.5, law enforcement officers and other designated officials may cordon off and close a disaster area to the public where the disaster has created "a menace to the public health or safety." A person is guilty of a misdemeanor if they willfully and knowingly enter a closed area and willfully remain within the area after receiving notice to evacuate. However, the official authorizing the closure may not prevent specified media representatives and livestock pass document-holders, e.g. ranchers, from entering the closed area unless entry is determined to be unsafe or their presence would interfere with emergency response. This bill includes PIV-I cardholders in this exception.

RELATED LEGISLATION:

SB 742 (Perez) of this session requires, among other things, electric utilities to coordinate with local emergency operations centers, as specified, including assigning liaison representatives to work with each local emergency operations center. (Pending in the Assembly Rules Committee)

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

SUPPORT:

Association of California Water Agencies Joint Powers Insurance Authority
 Bella Vista Water District
 Bellflower-Somerset Mutual Water Company
 Burbank Water and Power
 California Association of Mutual Water Companies
 California State Association of Counties
 City of Burbank Redevelopment Agency
 Coastside County Water District
 Community Water Systems Alliance
 Corcoran Irrigation District
 Crescenta Valley Water District
 Crestline-Lake Arrowhead Water Agency
 Foothill Municipal Water District

Frazier Park Public Utility District
Las Virgenes Municipal Water District
League of California Cities
Montecito Water District
North San Joaquin Water Conservation District
Palm Ranch Irrigation District
Palmdale Water District
Paradise Irrigation District
Pico Water District
Public Water Agencies Group
Purissima Hills Water District
Reclamation District 784
Rio Alto Water District
Rowland Water District
San Bernardino Valley Water Conservation District
San Gabriel County Water District
Scotts Valley Water District
Tuolumne Utilities District
Walnut Valley Water District

OPPOSITION:

None on file

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: In support of this bill, the Association of California Water Agencies Joint Powers Insurance Authority writes that, “SB 1001 provides a practical and common-sense solution by directing Cal OES to establish a uniform identification credential for essential utility workers who may need to access restricted areas. The bill ensures workers are properly vetted and trained, aligns the credentialing system with federal incident management standards, and preserves the authority of peace officers to control access when safety conditions require it. SB 1001 will improve coordination between utilities, emergency responders and law enforcement while helping ensure that critical infrastructure can be maintained and restored as quickly as possible.”

DUAL REFERRAL: Senate Emergency Management Committee & Senate Public Safety Committee