

Date of Hearing: June 23, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONS

Marc Berman, Chair

SB 1263 (McGuire) – As Amended June 15, 2026

NOTE: This bill is double-referred and, if passed by this Committee, will be re-referred to the Assembly Emergency Management Committee.

SENATE VOTE: 36-0

SUBJECT: Contractors: debris removal

SUMMARY: Prohibits a contractor from engaging in debris removal on residential property that is damaged or destroyed by a natural disaster, as specified, unless they hold a specific license from the Contractors State License Board (CSLB or Board), have passed a CSLB Hazardous Substance Removal Certification examination, and comply with Department of Industrial Relations' Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response (HAZWOPER) requirements.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes, until January 1, 2029, the CSLB under the Department of Consumer Affairs to implement and enforce the Contractors State License Law (License Law), which includes the licensing and regulation of contractors and home improvement salespersons. (Business and Professions Code (BPC) §§ 7000 *et seq.*)
- 2) Exempts from the License Law a work or operation on one undertaking or project by one or more contracts if the aggregate price for labor, materials, and all other items is less than \$1,000 that work or operation being considered of casual, minor, or inconsequential nature, and the work or operation does not require a building permit. (BPC § 7048)
- 3) Specifies that willful or deliberate disregard and violation of the building laws of the state constitutes a cause for disciplinary action against a licensee. (BPC § 7110)
- 4) Makes it a misdemeanor for any person to advertise for construction or work of improvement unless that person holds a valid license in the classification so advertised, except that a licensed building or engineering contractor may advertise as a general contractor. A violation is punishable by a fine of not less than \$700 and not more than \$1,000, in addition to any other punishment imposed for a violation. (BPC § 7027.1)
- 5) Requires the CSLB to promulgate regulations covering the assessment of civil penalties that consider the gravity of the violation, the good faith of the licensee or applicant for licensure being charged, and the history of previous violations. Except as otherwise provided, prohibits the CSLB from assessing a civil penalty that exceeds \$8,000. Specifies that the CSLB may assess a civil penalty up to \$30,000 for specified violations (e.g., willful or deliberate disregard and violation of state and local building laws; aiding or abetting an unlicensed person to violate the License Law; entering into a contract with an unlicensed person; and committing workers' compensation fraud). (BPC § 7099.2)

- 6) Establishes four branches of contracting business in the following classifications:
 - a) General engineering contracting (A).
 - b) General building contracting (B1).
 - c) Residential remodeling contracting (B2).
 - d) Specialty contracting (C).

(BPC § 7055)

- 7) Defines an A – General Engineering Contractor as those whose principal contracting businesses are in connection with fixed works requiring specialized engineering knowledge and skill, including the following divisions or subjects: irrigation, drainage, water power, water supply, flood control, inland waterways, harbors, docks and wharves, shipyards and ports, dams and hydroelectric projects, levees, river control and reclamation works, railroads, highways, streets and roads, tunnels, airports and airways, sewers and sewage disposal plants and systems, waste reduction plants, bridges, overpasses, underpasses and other similar works, pipelines and other systems for the transmission of petroleum and other liquid or gaseous substances, parks, playgrounds and other recreational works, refineries, chemical plants and similar industrial plants requiring specialized engineering knowledge and skill, powerhouses, powerplants and other utility plants and installations, mines and metallurgical plants, land leveling and earthmoving projects, excavating, grading, trenching, paving and surfacing work and cement and concrete works in connection with the above-mentioned fixed works. (BPC § 7056)
- 8) Defines a B1 – General Building Contractor as those whose principal contracting businesses are in connection with any structure built, being built, or to be built, for the support, shelter, and enclosure of persons, animals, chattels, or movable property of any kind, requiring in its construction the use of at least two unrelated building trades or crafts, or to do or superintend the whole or any part thereof. (BPC § 7057)
- 9) Defines a C – Specialty Contractor as those whose operations involve performance of construction work requiring special skill and whose principal contracting business involves the use of specialized building trades or crafts. (BPC § 7058)
- 10) Prohibits contractors licensed in one classification from contracting in the field of any other classification unless they are also licensed in that classification or are permitted to do so. (16 CCR § 830)
- 11) Defines the scope under which each specialty contractor classification may perform contracting work (16 CCR §§ 832.02, 832.4-832.17, 832.20-832.23, 832.26-832.29, 832.31-832.36, 832.38, 832.39, 832.42, 832.43, 832.45-832.47, 82.49-832.51, 832.53-832.55, 832.57, 832.60-832.62)

THIS BILL:

- 1) Prohibits a contractor from engaging in debris removal, including muck out and ash out, on residential property that is damaged or destroyed by a natural disaster for which a state of emergency is declared by the Governor or for which an emergency or major disaster is declared by the President of the United States, unless the contractor has one of the following licenses or classifications:
 - a) A - General Engineering Contractor.
 - b) B - General Building Contractor.
 - c) C-12 –Specialty Contractor Classification for Earthwork and Paving and
 - d) C-21 –Specialty Contractor Classification for Building Moving/Demolition.
- 2) Provides that during a declared federal or state emergency or for a declared disaster area due to a natural disaster, any contractor licensee authorized to perform debris removal must have passed a Hazardous Substance Removal Certification examination administered by the CSLB and comply with HAZWOPER requirements.
- 3) Specify that the restrictions for debris removal, including muck out and ash out, pursuant to this bill shall no longer apply after any needed debris removal, including muck out or ash out, is deemed completed or finalized within the requirements of the local permitting agency, irrespective of whether an emergency proclamation or disaster declaration is still in effect.
- 4) Defines “debris” as debris from, or located on, a residential property as a result of a natural disaster. “Debris” does not include any materials unrelated to the declared emergency or disaster.

FISCAL EFFECT: Pursuant to Senate Rule 28.8, no significant state costs anticipated.

COMMENTS:

Purpose. This bill is author-sponsored. According to the author:

As California faces increasingly destructive natural disasters, safe debris removal and disposal are essential components of disaster recovery. Improper handling of hazardous debris can create significant risks to public health, worker safety, and the environment. [This bill] clarifies who is authorized to conduct debris removal in declared disaster areas—including muck-out and ash-out operations—and requires that all who perform this work possess hazardous substance removal certifications and comply with HAZWOPER standards. These crucial safeguards will help ensure appropriate clearing of disaster sites while protecting workers and impacted communities.

Background. The CSLB is responsible for implementing and enforcing the License Law, which governs the licensure, practice, and discipline of contractors in California. A license is required for construction projects valued at \$1,000 or more, including labor and materials. The CSLB issues licenses to business entities and sole proprietors. Each license requires a qualifying

individual (a “qualifier”) who satisfies the experience and examination requirements for licensure and directly supervises and controls construction work performed under the license. The CSLB issues four types of licenses: “A” General Engineering Contractor; “B” General Building Contractor; “B-2” Residential Remodeling Contractor; and “C” Specialty Contractor, of which there are more than 40 classifications. Each licensing classification (i.e., electrical) authorizes a specific type of construction work. The CSLB is authorized to take disciplinary action against licensed and unlicensed contractors who have violated the License Law and is empowered to impose an escalating range of penalties, from citations and fines to license suspension or revocation.

In the aftermath of the Eaton and Palisades wildfires in Los Angeles County in 2025, the first step in rebuilding was a two-phase hazardous-waste cleanup and debris-removal process. In total, more than 2.5 million tons of debris were removed from more than 9,000 properties. In the first phase, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) removed hazardous waste such as batteries, fertilizers and pesticides, paints and oils, cleaners and solvents, and propane tanks and other pressurized products from all residential properties at no cost to homeowners.¹ In some instances, hazardous waste removal was deferred until phase two debris removal.

During phase two, property owners could elect to participate in a federally funded, government-sponsored program or to hire a private contractor.² If homeowners opted in for free debris removal, the United States Army Corps of Engineers removed structural debris, including damaged foundations, hazardous trees, asbestos, ash, contaminated soil, and destroyed vehicles.³ Those who opted out were required to arrange for and pay for debris removal themselves. Property owners were required to hire a certified consultant to check their property for asbestos, hire a licensed, specialized contractor to remove debris, and obtain a fire debris removal permit from Los Angeles County. Los Angeles County debris removal permits were issued to contractors with an A General Engineering Contractor, B General Building Contractor, C-12 Earthwork and Paving, and C-21 Building Moving/Demolition license.⁴

Moreover, contractors were required to hold the CSLB Hazardous Substance Removal Certification. Under current law, contractors who perform hazardous substance removal work at specific sites must pass the Hazardous Substance Removal Certification examination to add the certification to their existing license.⁵ The examination is developed by the CSLB in consultation with the Division of Occupational Safety and Health, the State Water Resources Control Board, the Department of Toxic Substances Control, and an advisory committee composed of two representatives of hazardous substance removal workers in California, two general engineering contractors in California, and two representatives of insurance companies in California who are selected by the Insurance Commissioner. The examination covers safe removal, transport, and disposal of hazardous materials, but not the identification of hazardous substances.

¹ Cleanup and debris removal, State of California, <https://www.ca.gov/lafires/help-for-you/rebuild-your-house/cleanup-debris-removal/> (last visited June 19, 2026).

² Debris Removal, LA Country Recovers, <https://recovery.lacounty.gov/debris-removal/> (last visited June 19, 2026).

³ Cleanup and debris removal, State of California, <https://www.ca.gov/lafires/help-for-you/rebuild-your-house/cleanup-debris-removal/> (last visited June 19, 2026).

⁴ Contractors State License Board, *Disaster Debris 2025* (2025), <https://www.cslb.ca.gov/Resources/MediaRoom/Disaster%20Debris%202025.pdf>.

⁵ Bus. and Prof. Code § 7058.7.

Los Angeles County also required contractors' employees to complete 40 hours of HAZWOPER training. Current Cal/OSHA health and safety standards cover employees performing fire cleanup work, including ash, soot, and debris removal, and require employers to provide mandated hazard training and proper protective equipment. According to the CSLB, more than 1,500 contractors met the debris removal contract requirements established by Los Angeles County.

This bill codifies those requirements. Specifically, this bill prohibits a contractor from engaging in debris removal on residential property that is damaged or destroyed by a natural disaster for which a state of emergency is declared by the Governor or for which an emergency or major disaster is declared by the President of the United States, unless the contractor has an A General Engineering Contractor, B General Building Contractor, C-12 Earthwork and Paving, or C-21 Building Moving/Demolition license. Additionally, the contractor must obtain Hazardous Substance Removal Certification from CSLB and comply with HAZWOPER standards. This bill is double-referred to the Assembly Emergency Management Committee.

Prior Related Legislation. SB 641 (Ashby) of 2025, as it relates to this bill, would have prohibited a contractor from engaging in debris removal unless the contractor has an A-General Engineering Contractor, B – General Building Contractor, C-12 Earthwork and Paving, or C-21 Building Moving/Demolition license; allowed CSLB to authorize additional classification to perform debris removal during a declared emergency or declared disaster area due to a natural disaster; and required any licensee authorized to perform debris removal to have passed the CSLB's hazardous substance certification examination and completed HAZWOPER training. *SB 641 was vetoed due to other provisions.*

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT:

The *Associated General Contractors* write in support:

This bill provides important benefits to licensed contractors by clarifying eligibility requirements and reinforcing the value of proper licensure and training. By requiring contractors engaged in debris removal to hold specific classifications, [this bill] helps ensure that qualified professionals are prioritized for this critical work, protecting both public safety and the integrity of the contracting industry. The bill's requirement for hazardous substance certification and compliance with established safety standards strengthens workforce preparedness. Contractors who invest in proper training and certification will be better positioned to compete for debris removal contracts, while also operating under clearer regulatory expectations during emergency response situations. [This bill] also promotes fairness by creating a more level playing field. By limiting participation to appropriately licensed and certified contractors, the bill helps reduce unqualified or opportunistic operators entering disaster zones, thereby supporting reputable contractors who adhere to industry standards.

ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION:

The *Southern California Contractors Association (SCCA)* writes in opposition:

[This bill] generally contains two provisions. The first requires a specific contractors license for debris removal in a declared disaster area. SCCA has no concerns with this provision. The second requires hazardous waste operations and emergency response (HAZWOPER) training for any contractor that “performs debris removal” in a declared disaster area. This requirement is unnecessary. SCCA contractors have a long history of performing soil mitigation and debris removal in declared disaster areas. Our members worked on soil mitigation and debris removal after the Camp Fire in 2017 and most recently the Palisades Fire in 2025. Our contractor members have sent hundreds of workers through the 40 hour HAZWOPER training. Additionally, SCCA contractors frequently work for Caltrans and other agencies removing non-hazardous debris due to mudslides. [This bill’s] requirement for HAZWOPER training for non-hazardous debris is entirely unnecessary.

POLICY ISSUES:

HAZWOPER Training. As noted above, the Southern California Contractors Association asserts that the HAZWOPER training requirement is unnecessary for the removal of non-hazardous debris. However, it is unclear whether many natural disasters, as specified by this bill, require non-hazardous debris removal. The author may wish to continue working with stakeholders to determine if this requirement is overbroad.

IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES:

Natural Disasters. Subdivision (a) prohibits a contractor from engaging in debris removal on residential property that is damaged or destroyed by *a natural disaster for which a state of emergency is declared by the Governor, or for which an emergency or major disaster is declared by the President of the United States*, unless they hold a specific contractor license. Subdivision (b) further requires that during *a declared federal or state emergency or for a declared disaster area due to a natural disaster*, a contractor authorized to perform debris removal must have additional certification and training. The differences in wording between the two subdivisions create confusion and risk establishing different requirements under varying circumstances. For clarity, the author may wish to strike the natural disaster language in (b) and cross-reference (a).

Definition of “Debris.” This bill defines “debris” as “debris from, or located on, a residential property as a result of a natural disaster,” and “does not include materials unrelated to the declared emergency or disaster.” As this definition is circular, the author may wish to further define “debris.”

Definition of “Debris Removal.” This bill prohibits individuals from engaging in the undefined act of “debris removal,” except as specified. The author may wish to define “debris removal.”

Local Permitting Requirements. Although it is the author’s intent to limit the applicability of this bill to debris removal requiring a permit from the local permitting agency, as currently drafted, that limitation is unclear. Subdivision (c) currently states that the restrictions shall no longer apply after any needed debris removal is deemed completed or finalized *within the requirements of the local permitting agency*, irrespective of whether an emergency proclamation or disaster declaration is still in effect. The author may wish to more clearly state that the bill only applies when a permit is required for debris removal resulting from a natural disaster.

Hazardous Trees. In a letter of concern, the California Special Districts Association writes that “there have been instances, such as the Park Fire, where in rural and wooded areas, hazard trees must be removed as part of the process of recovery and clean up to allow access to and ingress and egress into communities and homes in disaster areas[...] In some scenarios burned, dead trees pose a hazard to traffic, emergency response, and ingress to homes – including those on private or residential property can hinder recovery and clean up. Delays in felling hazard trees and risks of tree falls can necessitate road closures and further delay recovery and clean up.” This bill would not permit a C-49 Tree and Palm Contractor to remove hazardous trees on residential property after a natural disaster. Parts of the state that are heavily forested and have limited contractor availability rely on C-49 Tree and Palm Contractors for vegetation management and tree removal. C-49 Tree and Palm Contractors plant, maintain, and remove trees and palms. Their duties include pruning, stump grinding, and tree, palm, or limb guying. The author may wish to allow C-49 Tree and Palm Contractors to engage in debris removal, to the extent that they are performing tree-related work within the scope of the license classification.

AMENDMENTS: The author may wish to consider amending the bill as follows to improve clarity and add C-49 Tree and Palm Contractors:

(a) Notwithstanding Section 40520 of the Public Resources Code, a contractor shall not engage in debris removal, including muck out and ash out, on residential property that is damaged or destroyed by a natural disaster for which a state of emergency is declared by the Governor, pursuant to Section 8625 of Government Code, or for which an emergency or major disaster is declared by the President of the United States, unless the contractor has one of the following licenses or classifications:

(1) A - General Engineering Contractor.

(2) B - General Building Contractor.

(3) C-12 - Earthwork and Paving. ~~and~~

(4) C-21 - Building Moving/Demolition.

(5)(A) C-49 – Tree and Palm, to the extent permitted by the license classification.

(B) Debris removal pursuant to this paragraph shall be limited to tree service and removal only.

(b) ~~During a declared federal or state emergency or for a declared disaster area due to a natural disaster, any~~ Any licensee authorized to perform debris removal pursuant to this section shall have passed an approved hazardous substance certification examination pursuant to Section 7058.7 and shall comply with the hazardous waste operations and emergency response requirements pursuant to Section 5192 of Title 8 of the California Code of Regulations.

(c) *This section shall apply when a permit is required for debris removal resulting from a natural disaster as described in subdivision (a), and ~~The~~ the restrictions for debris removal,*

including muck out and ash out, pursuant to this section shall no longer apply after any needed debris removal, including muck out or ash out, is deemed completed or finalized *by* ~~within the requirements of~~ the local permitting agency, irrespective of whether an emergency proclamation or disaster declaration is still in effect.

(d) For the purposes of this section, “debris” means debris from, or located on, a residential property as a result of a natural disaster. “Debris” does not include any materials unrelated to the declared emergency or disaster.

(e) “Debris removal” means appropriate identification, encapsulation, transportation, and disposal of debris.

REGISTERED SUPPORT:

Associated General Contractors, California Chapters
Contractors State License Board

REGISTERED OPPOSITION:

Southern California Contractors Association (unless amended)

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