

Date of Hearing: August 5, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

SB 1263 (McGuire) – As Amended June 24, 2026

Policy Committee:	Business and Professions	Vote:	18 - 0
	Emergency Management		6 - 0

Urgency: No State Mandated Local Program: No Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill prohibits a contractor from engaging in debris removal on residential property damaged or destroyed by a natural disaster unless they hold a specified license from the Contractors State License Board (CSLB) and meet hazardous substance removal requirements.

Specifically, this bill:

- 1) Prohibits a contractor from engaging in debris removal, including muck out and ash out, on residential property 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 - Earthwork and Paving.
 - d) C-21 - Building Moving/Demolition.
 - e) C-49 - Tree and Palm
- 2) Limits the C-49 – Tree and Palm contractor license for debris removal pursuant to this bill to tree service and removal only.
- 3) Requires any licensee authorized by this bill to perform debris removal to have passed an approved hazardous substance certification examination, as specified, and comply with the hazardous waste operations and emergency response (HAZWOPER) requirements.
- 4) Specifies the requirements in this bill apply only when a permit is required for debris removal pursuant to item 1, above, and the restrictions for debris removal pursuant to this bill no longer apply after needed debris removal is deemed completed or finalized by the local permitting agency, irrespective of whether an emergency proclamation or disaster declaration is still in effect.

FISCAL EFFECT:

The CSLB anticipates no implementation costs.

COMMENTS:

1) **Purpose.** 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 and requires 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.

2) **Background.** The CSLB is responsible for implementing and enforcing the Contractors State 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 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.

Pursuant to the Public Resources code, existing law requires the Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle) to prequalify contractors to enter into debris-removal contracts in communities impacted by wildfires. In the wake of the 2025 wildfires in southern California, Governor Newsom signed EO N-5-25, which directed state agencies to develop and implement a comprehensive plan for debris removal.

Following the Eaton and Palisades wildfires in Los Angeles County in 2025, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) removed hazardous waste from all residential properties at no cost to homeowners. Property owners could then elect to participate in a federally funded government-sponsored debris removal program provided by the United States Army Corps of Engineers or to obtain a fire debris removal permit from Los Angeles County and hire a private licensed, specialized contractor to remove debris.

Los Angeles County issued debris removal permits to a contractor with an A, B, C-12, or C-21 license classification and who held the CSLB hazardous substance removal certification, which is required under existing law for contractors who perform hazardous substance removal work at specific sites. Los Angeles County also required contractors' employees to complete 40 hours of HAZWOPER training.

This bill places the Los Angeles County debris-removal permitting requirements in state statute, thus setting a statewide licensing standard for future declared natural disasters.

The bill is opposed by the Southern California Contractors Association (SCCA) who is concerned that the bill's requirement for HAZWOPER training also applies to non-hazardous

debris removal. The author's office and SCCA indicate it has reached agreement on amendments that address this issue and will bring SCCA in support of the bill.

- 3) **Related Legislation.** SB 641 (Ashby), of this legislative session, contained similar provisions along with unrelated provisions. SB 641 was vetoed due to unrelated provisions.

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