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## SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair  
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

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### SB 1299 (Arreguín) - State Fire Marshal Fire Suppression Education and Training Safety Act

**Version:** March 25, 2026

**Urgency:** No

**Hearing Date:** May 4, 2026

**Policy Vote:** E.M. 9 - 0, L., P.E. & R. 5 - 0

**Mandate:** Yes

**Consultant:** Janelle Miyashiro

**Bill Summary:** SB 1299 establishes certification and training requirements under the Office of the State Fire Marshal (SFM) for individuals to perform work on fire suppression systems, as specified.

#### **Fiscal Impact:**

- Unknown fiscal impact to the SFM. Staff notes that while the bill generally codifies the SFM's current regulations regarding its Automatic Extinguishing System (AES) Program, it introduces terminology that departs from existing regulatory standards (e.g., "chemical-based fire suppression systems" vs. "engineered and pre-engineered fixed extinguishing systems"). To the extent the SFM must update its AES regulations to reconcile any differences, there may be additional but potentially absorbable rulemaking workload. Administrative workload for the SFM may be offset to some extent by fee revenue (SFM Licensing and Certification Fund).
- To the extent there are prosecutions for misdemeanor violations of this bill, there will be related cost pressures to the courts (Trial Court Trust Fund) to adjudicate the criminal charges and costs to the counties to incarcerate persons who are convicted. These actual cost pressures and costs will depend on the number of prosecutions and convictions.

**Background:** A fire sprinkler fitter is a specialized pipefitter trade within the building and construction industry focused on the design, installation, maintenance, and repair of all types of fire protection and fire suppression systems, including wet and dry pipe systems, deluge systems, and foam systems. A fire sprinkler fitter is responsible for reading blueprints and plan layouts and installing hangers and overhead piping in all types of buildings and construction. Fire sprinklers are found in a variety of commercial, industrial and residential buildings, including high-rises, warehouses, aircraft hangars, hotels, motels, and homes.

*AES Certification.* Pursuant to AB 433 (Gordon, Chapter 377, Statutes of 2013), the SFM established the AES certification and registration program in regulations to standardize training and safety qualifications for fire sprinkler fitters. Effective July 1, 2017, these regulations require all fitters to be certified and all trainees or apprentices to be registered. To obtain certification, an individual must be at least 16 years old, pass a written exam, and provide proof of either a C-16 contractor license or completion of an approved apprenticeship program. As of 2025, the SFM reported 4,108 certified or registered fitters in California.

*Legal Challenge and Injunction.* In December 2025, the Sacramento Superior Court ruled in *Fire Guard Corporation, et al. v. California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection* that certain regulatory provisions violated the Administrative Procedure Act. Specifically, the court found that the SFM failed to provide adequate public comment periods for rules regarding the registration and supervision of trainees. Consequently, the court issued an injunction effective January 7, 2026, invalidating requirements that trainees enroll in apprenticeship programs within one year of hire and striking down specific supervision ratios.

*Current Status.* While the court invalidated specific trainee provisions, it acknowledged the necessity of the AES program for public safety and clarified that the SFM is not prohibited from initiating new rulemaking. The SFM is currently developing a new regulatory package to address the invalidated sections. This process is in the fiscal impact analysis stage, with a formal submission to the Office of Administrative Law anticipated upon completion.

### **Proposed Law:**

- Establishes the State Fire Marshal Fire Suppression Education and Training Safety Act (Act), with the purpose of improving the performance and reliability of water- and chemical-based fire suppression systems by providing a means to certify and register any person who installs, alters, repairs, and inspects, tests, maintains, performs safe-off, or adds appurtenances to those systems.
- Establishes definitions for purposes of the Act.
- Prohibits a person from engaging in the installation, extension, alteration, repair, service, inspection, maintenance, safe-off, or investigation of internal piping condition and obstructions of, or add appurtenances to, water- or chemical-based fire suppression systems, or otherwise work on fire suppression systems, without first being certified or registered by the SFM.
- Excludes the following from certification or registration requirements under the Act:
  - Installation, alteration, or repair of residential fire sprinkler systems in one- and two-family dwellings.
  - installation, alteration, or repair of underground water supply lines from the connection of the water supply to the first joint or mechanical connection at the base of the system riser.
  - Pre-engineered fixed extinguishing systems.
  - Fire suppression personnel, fire inspectors, or fire marshals inspecting or testing a fire suppression or standpipe system for the purposes of ensuring proper operation.
  - Monthly, quarterly, and annual inspections performed by persons in accordance with the applicable provisions of Chapter 5 (commencing with Section 901) of Division 1 of Title 19 of the California Code of Regulations.

- Provides that a certified fire sprinkler fitter shall directly supervise apprentices and up to two trainees and requires a person who possesses a C-16 Fire Protection Contractor license from the Contractors State License Board (C-16 contractor) to be responsible for ensuring the people they assign to work on a fire suppression system are appropriately certified or registered and comply with the supervisor ratios in this bill.
- Specifies that a person not registered in a state or federally approved sprinkler fitter apprenticeship program must be registered with the SFM as a trainee and work as a trainee for up to one year from the date of their registration.
- Identifies the requirements an applicant must meet to be registered as an apprentice or trainee, or certified as a fire sprinkler fitter.
- Requires a certified fire sprinkler fitter to complete specified continuing education (CE) requirements and gives the SFM discretion to determine further CE requirements.
- Requires a state or federally approved fire sprinkler fitter apprenticeship program to consist of specified minimum time requirements.
- Provides that the SFM shall evaluate and approve an applicant's out-of-state apprenticeship training using specified criteria from the Department of Industrial Relation's Division of Apprenticeship Standards (DAS).
- Directs the SFM to compile trainee and apprentice registrations and fire sprinkler fitter certifications in a database and authorizes the SFM to coordinate with DAS while compiling the required data, as specified.
- Establishes various enforcement provisions relating to written complaints of alleged violations; the authority to inspect project worksites; the issuance of stop work orders, notices of violations and correction orders; and, specifies disciplinary actions and penalties for violations of this bill.
- Authorizes the SFM to establish and collect reasonable fees to cover the costs of implementing this bill.

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