

Date of Hearing: June 24, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT

Liz Ortega, Chair

SB 1299 (Arreguín) – As Amended June 17, 2026

SENATE VOTE: 39-0

SUBJECT: State Fire Marshal Fire Suppression Education and Training Safety Act

SUMMARY: 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. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Establishes the SFM Fire Suppression Education and Training Safety Act to improve the performance and reliability of fire suppression systems by providing a means to certify and register any person who installs, alters, repairs, inspects, tests, maintains, performs safe-off, or adds appurtenances to those systems.
- 2) 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 adding appurtenances to fire suppression systems, or otherwise working on fire suppression systems, without first being certified or registered by the SFM.
- 3) Specifies that the prohibition in (2) above shall not apply to any of the following:
 - a) Installation, alteration, or repair of one- and two-family residential fire sprinkler systems.
 - b) The installation, alteration, or repair of underground water supply lines, as specified.
 - c) Pre-engineered fixed extinguishing systems.
 - d) Specified fire suppression personnel, fire inspectors, or fire marshals performing specified inspections or testing.
 - e) Monthly, quarterly, and annual system-related inspections, as specified.
- 4) Notwithstanding (3) above, a person may perform an investigation of internal piping conditions and obstructions of water-based fire suppression systems without first being certified or registered by the SFM if the person meets both of the following criteria:
 - a) The person holds a valid certificate or license from a nationally-recognized professional standards organization that requires the holder to successfully demonstrate having at least five years of experience in the inspection, testing, and maintenance of water-based fire suppression systems.
 - b) The person successfully passes a written examination on California-based regulations and a practical physical examination given by the professional standards organization, as specified.

- 5) Requires a certified fire sprinkler fitter to directly supervise apprentices and up to two trainees, and requires a licensed C-16 Fire Protection 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 aforementioned supervisor ratios.

Requirements for non-apprentice trainees:

- 6) 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.
- 7) Requires, for an applicant to be registered as a trainee, that the person meets the following requirements:
 - a) Be 16 years of age or older.
 - b) Complete a fire sprinkler fitter trainee registration application and pay the accompanying fees, as specified.
 - c) Provide proof of employment with a licensed C-16 Fire Protection Contractor.
- 8) Requires, upon verification of compliance with the trainee requirements in (7) above, the SFM to issue the applicant a trainee registration card.
- 9) Requires the trainee to be registered into a State- or federally-approved fire sprinkler fitter apprenticeship program within one year of their date of registration as a trainee.
 - a) Provides, if the trainee is not accepted into a State- or federally-approved fire sprinkler fitter apprenticeship program within one year of their date of hire, the individual shall no longer be registered to work within the scope of this bill.

Requirements for apprentices:

- 10) Requires, for an applicant to be registered as an apprentice, that the person meets the following requirements:
 - a) Be 16 years of age or older.
 - b) Complete a fire sprinkler fitter apprentice registration application and pay the accompanying fees, as specified.
 - c) Provide proof of acceptance into a State- or federally-approved fire sprinkler fitter apprenticeship program.
- 11) Requires, upon verification of compliance with the apprentice requirements in (10) above, the SFM to issue the applicant an apprentice registration card.
- 12) Provides that a person possessing an apprentice registration shall only perform installation of a fire suppression system for a properly licensed C-16 Fire Protection Contractor, and shall perform tasks within this bill's scope and meet any additional apprenticeship program standards for the occupation of fire sprinkler fitter.

Requirements for certified fire sprinkler fitters:

- 13) Requires, for an applicant to be certified as a fire sprinkler fitter, that the person meets the following requirements:
 - a) Be 16 years of age or older.
 - b) Complete a sprinkler fitter certification application and pay the accompanying fees, as specified.
 - c) Provide one of the following:
 - i) Proof of completion of a State- or federally-approved fire sprinkler fitter apprenticeship program.
 - ii) Proof of possession of a valid C-16 Fire Protection Contractor license issued by the Contractors State License Board.
 - d) Pass a written examination as developed or selected by the SFM.
- 14) Requires, upon verification of compliance with the requirements of (13) above, the SFM to issue a certified fire sprinkler fitter card.
- 15) Requires a State- or federally-approved fire sprinkler fitter apprenticeship program to consist of specified minimum time requirements.
- 16) Requires out-of-state applicants for commercial or multifamily residential certification to provide documentation that they have worked for at least the minimum required hours and years of experience, as specified.
- 17) Provides that the SFM shall evaluate and approve an applicant's out-of-state apprenticeship training using the Minimum Industry Training Criteria for Pipe Trades from the Department of Industrial Relation's (DIR) Division of Apprenticeship Standards (DAS).
- 18) Requires the SFM to compile trainee and apprentice registrations and fire sprinkler fitter certifications in a database designed to link the Automatic Extinguishing Systems Program to the SFM's website, and authorizes the SFM to coordinate with the DAS while compiling data for registered apprentices.
- 19) Requires a certified fire sprinkler fitter to complete specified continuing education (CE) requirements and gives the SFM discretion to determine further CE requirements.
- 20) 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.
- 21) Authorizes the SFM to establish and collect reasonable fees to cover the costs of implementing this bill.
- 22) Defines certain terms, including:

- a) “Fire suppression system” to mean an assembly of piping or conduit and associated components, whether public or private, that conveys water or other approved fire-suppressing agents to extinguish, control, or contain fire and to provide protection from exposure to fire or other products of combustion, as specified.
- b) “Installation” to mean the installation of new, or the retrofitting, altering, or repairing of existing, fire suppression systems, and includes those activities included within “work on a fire suppression system,” as defined in (c) below.
- c) “Work on a fire suppression system” to mean the onsite layout, onsite fabrication, work and practice concerning the construction, installation, alteration, modification, repair, performance of safe-off, initial acceptance testing and inspection, planned or emergency impairment inspection, obstruction investigation, test, or performance of maintenance and service, on or of a fire suppression system.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the SFM, within the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) to protect life and property through the development and application of fire prevention, engineering, training and education, and enforcement. Health and Safety Code § 13100.
- 2) Authorizes the SFM to propose, adopt, and administer regulations deemed necessary to ensure fire safety in buildings and structures in the state, including those related to construction, modification, installation, testing, inspection, labeling, certification, registration, licensing, reporting, operation, and maintenance, and to collect reasonable fees necessary to implement any of the specified regulatory activities. Health and Safety Code § 13110.
- 3) Requires the SFM to regulate the servicing, testing, and maintenance of all automatic fire extinguishing systems; requires all system tests to be performed by licensed professionals to ensure public safety and code compliance. Health and Safety Code § 13195 et seq.
- 4) Establishes a certification and registration program for Automatic Fire Extinguishing Systems Sprinkler Fitters in SFM regulations, including an application process, qualifications, performance standards, and continuing education requirements, to require anyone who installs, alters or repairs water-based fire protection systems possesses the necessary skills and qualifications to perform the work. 19 CCR § 920 – 19 CCR § 948.
- 5) Provides that any person who willfully or maliciously constructs or maintains a fire-protection system in any structure with the intent to install a fire protection system which is known to be inoperable or to impair the effective operation of a system, so as to threaten the safety of any occupant or user of the structure in the event of a fire, shall be subject to imprisonment, as specified, for two, three, or four years. Penal Code § 386.
- 6) Provides for apprenticeship programs within the DAS, sponsored by specific entities and employers, and requires the Chief of the DAS to perform various functions with respect to apprenticeship programs and the welfare of apprentices. Labor Code § 3070 et seq.
- 7) Creates, within the DAS, the California Apprenticeship Council, which issues rules and regulations that establish standards for minimum wages, maximum hours, and working

conditions for apprentice agreements in the building and construction trades and for firefighter occupations, as specified. Labor Code § 3070 et seq.

- 8) Requires the DAS to evaluate apprenticeship programs to ensure standards compliance, proper supervision, required classroom instruction is provided, work processes in the standards are covered, graduates have completed program requirements, and funds were properly obtained and appropriately expended. Labor Code § 3073.1.
- 9) Provides that an apprenticeship program may be administered by a joint apprenticeship committee, unilateral management or labor apprenticeship committee, or an individual employer; that programs may be approved by the Chief of the DAS in any trade or area of the state; and that, where a collective bargaining agreement exists, requires a program to be jointly sponsored, as specified. Labor Code § 3075(a).

FISCAL EFFECT: According to the Senate Appropriations Committee:

- Unknown fiscal impact to the SFM. Staff notes that while the bill generally codifies the SFM’s current regulations regarding its AES Program, it introduces an alternative pathway for persons to be eligible to work on water-based fire suppression systems and uses terminology that departs from existing regulatory standards (e.g., “chemical-based fire suppression systems” vs. “engineered and pre-engineered fixed extinguishing systems”). If the SFM must update its AES regulations, 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.

COMMENTS: A fire sprinkler fitter is a specialized pipefitter trade focused on the design, installation, maintenance, and repair of all types of fire protection and fire suppression systems. There are strict regulations for individuals performing fire sprinkler installation and maintenance to ensure systems work properly in an emergency.

History of the Automatic Extinguishing Systems (AES) certification and registration program:

In 2013, the Legislature passed AB 433 (Gordon, Chapter 377, Statutes of 2013), which granted the SFM the authority to adopt regulations and standards deemed necessary to ensure fire safety in all types of occupancies, including regulations related to certification, registration, and licensing. The SFM thereafter developed the AES certification and registration program in regulations to establish minimum statewide training standards.

However, subsequently, a lawsuit (Fire Guard Corporation, et al. v. California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection) was filed in 2019 challenging the regulations on the basis of violations under the rulemaking procedures of the Administrative Procedure Act (APA). The court ruled in December 2025 that the regulatory provisions related to the registration and supervision of fire sprinkler fitter trainees violated the appropriate public comment periods

established in the APA and therefore deemed those provisions invalid. The judgment and injunction became effective on January 7, 2026.

The ruling invalidated only certain provisions within the AES certification program, including certain training and supervision mandates. Specifically, the court struck down the requirements that 1) new hires must enroll in a State- or federally-approved apprenticeship program within one year of their hire date, and 2) the supervision ratios that restricted a certified fire sprinkler fitter to managing only apprentices and a maximum of two trainees. All other pieces of the AES regulations remain in place. A Fire Sprinkler Fitter Trainee Registration, Fire Sprinkler Fitter Apprentice Registration, or Fire Sprinkler Fitter Certification is still required for persons working as sprinkler fitters in the state.

Despite this ruling, the court explicitly preserved the authority of the SFM to establish regulations for fire sprinkler fitters. Therefore, this bill seeks to codify and expand on those regulations in statute.

In a January 2026 informational bulletin¹, the SFM stated that it is “actively working on a rulemaking package to resubmit the stricken sections to the Office of Administrative Law.”

According to the author: “Fire sprinkler systems are one of our most critical tools for saving lives in a fire. When properly installed and maintained, they are extraordinarily effective — but that effectiveness depends entirely on the skill and training of the workers who install, inspect, and service them. SB 1299 ensures that California has a clear, enforceable framework for certifying and training fire sprinkler fitters. Every Californian deserves to know that the fire suppression systems protecting their homes, workplaces, and communities have been installed and maintained by qualified professionals.”

Arguments in Support

The California State Pipe Trades Council and the Sprinkler Fitters Association of California, co-sponsors of this measure, write that “our organizations support and work in partnership with rigorous, state approved apprenticeship programs that combine classroom instruction with thousands of hours of supervised on the job training. These programs are specifically designed to ensure that fire sprinkler systems perform as intended when lives depend on them. Proper training is not optional in this trade, it is essential to protecting building occupants, first responders, and property.

Without clear statutory standards, unqualified or insufficiently trained individuals may perform highly technical fire suppression work, increasing the risk of system failure, property loss, and tragic consequences during an emergency. SB 1299 reaffirms California’s commitment to public safety by ensuring that only properly trained and certified professionals perform this critical life-safety work.”

Arguments in Opposition

None on file.

¹ CAL FIRE - OFFICE OF THE STATE FIRE MARSHAL Information Bulletin 26-001.
<https://osfm.fire.ca.gov/resources/information-bulletins>

Prior and Related Legislation

AB 433 (Gordon), Chapter 377, Statutes of 2013, granted the SFM the authority to adopt regulations and standards deemed necessary to ensure fire safety in all types of occupancies, including regulations related to certification, registration, and licensing

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**Support**

California State Pipe Trades Council (Co-Sponsor)
Sprinkler Fitters Association of California (Co-Sponsor)
Fire Sprinkler Advisory Board of Southern California
National Fire Sprinkler Association
National Fire Sprinkler Association, Los Angeles Area Chapter
National Fire Sprinkler Association, San Francisco Bay Area Chapter
State Building and Construction Trades Council

Opposition

None on file.

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