

SENATE THIRD READING

SB 1299 (Arreguín)

As Amended June 17, 2026

Majority vote

SUMMARY

This bill establishes certification and training requirements under the Office of the State Fire Marshal (SFM) for individuals to perform work on fire suppression systems.

Major Provisions

- 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 performs work on those systems.
- 2) Prohibits a person from engaging in work on a fire suppression system without first being certified or registered by the SFM; specifies that prohibitions do not apply to the installation, alteration, or repair of one and two-family residential fire sprinkler systems or underground water supply lines, pre-engineered fixed extinguishing systems, and other specified fire suppression personnel, fire inspectors, or fire marshals performing inspections or testing.
- 3) Notwithstanding 2), a person may perform an investigation of internal piping condition and obstructions of fire suppression systems without first being certified or registered by the State Fire Marshal 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.
- 4) Requires a licensed C-16 Fire Protection Contractor to ensure all people assigned to work on a fire suppression system are appropriately certified or registered and in compliance with supervisor-to-apprentice and supervisor-to-trainee ratios.
- 5) 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).
- 6) 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.
- 7) 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.

COMMENTS

Automatic Fire Extinguishing Systems Sprinkler Fitters (*AES*) *Certification Regulations*: AB 433 (Gordon) Chapter 377, Statutes of 2013 grants the SFM the authority to adopt regulations and standards deemed necessary to ensure fire safety in all types of occupancies in California, including regulations related to certification, registration, and licensing. Due to the increasing use of fire protection systems throughout the state, changes in construction standards, and the increased complexity of fire protection systems, the SFM developed the AES certification and registration program in regulations to establish minimum statewide training standards and ensure that those who install or work on life safety fire suppression systems in California possess the necessary skills, experience, and qualifications to safely do so.¹ AES Certification regulations resulted from a workgroup consisting of representatives from industry, labor, enforcing agencies, and CAL FIRE/SFM staff and were approved by the SFM's AES Technical Advisory Committee. The SFM periodically updates AES regulations, including exam administration and fee structures, driven by direct input from industry and labor representatives on the AES Committee. The regulations took effect on July 1, 2017, and can be found in the California Code of Regulations, Title 19, Division 1, Chapter 5.5. The regulations included an implementation period and specified that by January 1, 2019, all fitters shall possess a certification card, and all trainees and apprentices shall possess a registration card. The SFM reports a total of 4,108 fitters were certified or registered in 2025.

Fire Guard Corporation, et al. v. California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection: In 2019, a coalition of plaintiffs in the *Fire Guard Corp., et al. v. CAL FIRE*, challenged AES certification regulations, citing violations under the rulemaking procedures of the Administrative Procedure Act (APA), which is designed to allow the public to participate in the adoption of state regulations. In December 2025, the Sacramento Superior Court issued its judgment and injunction, finding 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 judgement and injunction became effective on January 7, 2026.

The court ruling invalidated specific training and supervision mandates within the AES certification program, rendering several key provisions unenforceable. Specifically, new hires are no longer legally required to enroll in a state or federally approved apprenticeship program within one year of their hire date. Additionally, the court struck down the strict supervision ratios that restricted a certified fire sprinkler fitter to managing only apprentices and a maximum of two trainees.

Despite striking these specific rules, the court acknowledged the AES certification program's necessity for protecting public safety. Furthermore, the ruling explicitly preserves the authority of the SFM to introduce new regulations. This means the SFM is fully permitted to launch future rulemaking proceedings to establish updated apprenticeship or experience-related requirements for training fire sprinkler fitters.

Codifying Existing Regulations: This bill codifies current regulations, as well as the provisions invalidated by the court, into statute governing fire suppression systems. The author states that,

¹ Laws and Regulations For Automatic Extinguishing Systems, Automatic Fire Extinguishing Systems Laws And Regulations (PDF)

as a result of the court ruling, current California law lacks clear, enforceable experience and apprenticeship standards for fire sprinkler fitter trainees. According to the author, the regulatory gap undermines workforce quality. This bill seeks to address that gap by restoring enforceable experience standards, requiring direct supervision of trainees, mandating completion of approved apprenticeship programs, and providing robust enforcement tools to ensure that only properly trained and certified professionals perform this highly technical fire suppression work to reduce the risk of system failure.

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 bill co-sponsors, Sprinkler Fitters Association of California and California State Pipe Trades Council, write in support that "SB 1299 closes a critical regulatory gap that currently undermines workforce standards and public safety in California's fire protection industry. Fire suppression systems are among the most important life-safety features in residential, commercial, and industrial buildings. Their effectiveness depends entirely on proper installation, inspection, testing, and maintenance by individuals who possess the training, experience, and technical expertise required to perform this highly specialized work.... 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.

FISCAL COMMENTS

- 1) Minor and absorbable costs to the SFM, as this bill generally codifies the SFM's Automatic Extinguishing Systems (AES) Certification regulations currently in effect and the SFM's pending rulemaking package to reenact prior provisions of the regulations recently struck down by a court.
- 2) Likely absorbable cost pressures to the courts to the extent there are prosecutions of the misdemeanor charge specified by this bill and to the counties to subsequently incarcerate a convicted individual. Although this bill provides that a violation of the Act or a subsequent order, rule, or regulation is a misdemeanor, existing law already provides that a violation of the chapter of law regarding the SFM, including a subsequent order, rule, or regulation, is a misdemeanor. The AES Certification regulations, which this bill generally codifies under the Act, were made pursuant to the chapter of law for which a violation is already a misdemeanor. Thus, a violation of the Act likely would not constitute a new misdemeanor.
- 3) The Department of Justice reports no significant fiscal impact from this bill.

VOTES**SENATE FLOOR: 39-0-1**

YES: Allen, Alvarado-Gil, Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Becker, Blakespear, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cervantes, Choi, Cortese, Durazo, Gonzalez, Grayson, Grove, Hurtado, Jones, Laird, Limón, McGuire, McNerney, Menjivar, Niello, Ochoa Bogh, Padilla, Pérez, Reyes, Richardson, Rubio, Seyarto, Smallwood-Cuevas, Stern, Strickland, Umberg, Valladares, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener

ABS, ABST OR NV: Dahle

ASM EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT: 4-2-1

YES: Ransom, Arambula, Bennett, Calderon

NO: Hadwick, DeMaio

ABS, ABST OR NV: Bains

ASM LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT: 7-0-0

YES: Ortega, Alanis, Chen, Elhawary, Kalra, Lee, Ward

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 14-0-1

YES: Wicks, Hoover, Arambula, Calderon, Caloza, Dixon, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Pacheco, Pellerin, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Tangipa

ABS, ABST OR NV: Ta

UPDATED

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