UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Bill No: SB 1299
Author: Arreguín (D)
Amended: 8/17/26
Vote: 21

SENATE EMERGENCY MGT. COMMITTEE: 9-0, 4/14/26
AYES: Stern, Seyarto, Allen, Ashby, Blakespear, Dahle, Grayson, Pérez, Rubio

SENATE LABOR, PUB. EMP. & RET. COMMITTEE: 5-0, 4/22/26
AYES: Smallwood-Cuevas, Strickland, Cortese, Durazo, Laird

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 7-0, 5/14/26
AYES: Cervantes, Seyarto, Cabaldon, Dahle, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab

SENATE FLOOR: 39-0, 5/28/26
AYES: 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
NO VOTE RECORDED: Dahle

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 71-4, 8/24/26 - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: State Fire Marshal Fire Sprinkler Fitter Certification Act

SOURCE: California State Pipe Trades Council
Sprinkler Fitters Association of California

DIGEST: 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, as specified.

Assembly Amendments rename this bill as the Sprinkler Fitter Certification Act; delete "water-or chemical-based" from the definition of fire suppression system;

and make other clarifying and technical changes to provisions governing certification, supervision, continuing education, and enforcement, as specified.

ANALYSIS:

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.

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, registration, licensing, reporting, operation, and maintenance, and to collect reasonable fees necessary to implement any of the specified regulatory activities.

3) Establishes a certification and registration program for Automatic Fire Extinguishing Systems Sprinkler Fitters (AES Certification) 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.

4) Defines in AES Certification regulations "water-based fire protection system" and "apprentice," as specified.

5) Excludes the following work from the AES Certification regulations:

   a) One and two-family residential sprinkler systems;
   b) Installation, alteration or repair of underground water supply lines, as specified; and,
   c) Installation of pre-engineered water-based fire extinguishing systems.

This bill:

1) Establishes the SFM Sprinkler Fitter Certification Act.

2) Defines numerous terms for purposes of this bill.

3) Prohibits a person from engaging in work on a fire suppression system without first being certified or registered by the SFM.

4) Specifies that the prohibition in 3) 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.
   f) Temporary replacement of a sprinkler head following activation by an authority having jurisdiction.

5) Authorizes a person to perform internal inspection and obstruction investigations of a fire suppression system if the person meets both of the following criteria:

   a) The person holds a valid certificate from specified nationally recognized professional certification organizations and at the specified level of training and experience; and,
   b) The person registers their professional certification with the SFM and pays the prescribed fee. Provides that the registration and fee requirements shall not be required until January 1, 2029.

6) Requires the SFM to adopt registration requirements by regulation by January 1,2029, as specified.

7) Allows a registered apprecentic or certified fire sprinkler fitter to work for a licensed C-16 Fire Protection Contractor or a public entity, as specified,

8) Provides that a certified fire sprinkler fitter shall directly supervise apprentices and up to two trainees, as specified.

9) Requires a licensed C-16 Fire Protection Contractor, or public entity, as applicable, 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.

10) 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.

11) Identifies the requirements an applicant must meet to be registered as an apprentice or trainee, or certified as a fire sprinkler fitter.

12) Requires a state or federally approved fire sprinkler fitter apprenticeship program to consist of specified minimum time requirements.

13) 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).

14) 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.

15) Requires the SFM to determine further continuing education requirements, as specified.

16) 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.

17) Authorizes the SFM to establish and collect reasonable fees to cover the costs of implementing this bill.

Background

Fire sprinkler fitters. 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 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.

According to the SFM, the 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 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 SFM reports a total of 4,108 fitters were certified or registered in 2025.

Current requirements. As specified in the regulations, a person must be 16 years of age or older, complete the required application, provide proof of completion of a state or federally approved apprenticeship program or proof of a valid C-16 contractor license, and pass a written exam to be certified as a fire sprinkler fitter. To register as an apprentice, a person must be 16 years of age or older, complete the required application, provide proof of acceptance into a state or federally approved apprenticeship program, and provide proof of employment with a licensed C-16 contractor. To register as a trainee, a person must be 16 years of age or older, complete the required application, and provide proof of employment with a licensed C-16 contractor.

Legal challenge. In 2019, a coalition of contractors in *Fire Guard Corporation, et al. v. California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection* challenged the validity of the 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 judgement 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 provisions that were stricken required trainees to be enrolled in a state or federally approved apprenticeship program within one year of their date of hire and to work under the direct supervision of a certified fire sprinkler fitter and allowed certified fire sprinklers to supervise apprentices and up to two trainees. While the court rendered these provisions unenforceable, it acknowledged that the AES certification program is necessary to protect public safety and stated that it shall not prohibit the SFM from commencing a new rulemaking proceeding to establish apprenticeship and/or other experience-related requirements for the training of fire sprinkler fitters.

In a January 2026 Information Bulletin describing the judgement and injunction, the SFM states that it is actively working on a rulemaking package to address the invalidated provisions and is currently in the final stages of developing the fiscal impacts, which is a key component before moving forward. Once that is completed, the SFM states that it anticipates submitting the package to the Office of Administrative Law within the next few months.

Codification of the regulations. This bill places much of the current regulations as well as the legally invalidated provisions into statute and applies to both water- and chemical-based fire suppression systems. The author states that, as a result of the court ruling, current law lacks clear, enforceable experience and apprenticeship standards for fire sprinkler fitter trainees and this bill seeks to address that regulatory 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.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: Yes

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee:

1) Minor and absorbable costs to the SFM, as this bill generally codifies the SFM's 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.

SUPPORT: (Verified 8/18/26)

California State Pipe Trades Council (co-source)
Sprinkler Fitters Association of California (co-source)
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
Road Sprinkler Fitters Local Union 669
Sprinkler Fitters Local 483
Sprinkler Fitters Local 709

OPPOSITION: (Verified 8/18/26)

None received

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: In support of this bill, the co-sponsors, California State Pipe Trades Council and the Sprinkler Fitters Association of California, write 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."

Assembly Floor 71 4 4
Ayes: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Connolly, Davies, Dixon, Elhawary, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Johnson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas Noes: DeMaio, Ellis, Hadwick, Macedo No Vote Recorded: Chen, McKinnor, Schultz, Ta

Prepared by: Cassie Royce / E.M. / (916) 651-1547
11/6/26 10:10:15

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