
UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Bill No: SB 326
Author: Becker (D) and Laird (D), et al.
Amended: 9/4/25 in Assembly
Vote: 21

SENATE GOVERNMENTAL ORG. COMMITTEE: 13-0, 3/25/25
AYES: Padilla, Valladares, Archuleta, Ashby, Blakespear, Cervantes, Hurtado,
Jones, Ochoa Bogh, Richardson, Rubio, Wahab, Weber Pierson
NO VOTE RECORDED: Dahle, Smallwood-Cuevas

SENATE NATURAL RES. & WATER COMMITTEE: 6-0, 4/22/25
AYES: Limón, Seyarto, Allen, Grove, Laird, Stern
NO VOTE RECORDED: Hurtado

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 6-0, 5/23/25
AYES: Caballero, Seyarto, Cabaldon, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab
NO VOTE RECORDED: Dahle

SENATE FLOOR: 39-0, 6/3/25
AYES: Allen, Alvarado-Gil, Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Becker, Blakespear,
Cabaldon, Caballero, Cervantes, Choi, Cortese, Dahle, Durazo, Gonzalez,
Grayson, Grove, Hurtado, Jones, Laird, Limón, McGuire, McNerney, Menjivar,
Niello, Ochoa Bogh, Padilla, Pérez, Richardson, Rubio, Seyarto, Smallwood-
Cuevas, Stern, Strickland, Umberg, Valladares, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener
NO VOTE RECORDED: Reyes

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 74-0, 9/12/25 – Roll call not available

SUBJECT: Wildfire safety: fire protection building standards: defensible space
requirements: The California Wildfire Mitigation Strategic Planning
Act

SOURCE: Author

DIGEST: This bill requires the Office of the State Fire Marshal (SFM) to prepare, and regularly update, a Wildfire Risk Mitigation Planning Framework (Framework), a Wildfire Risk Baseline and Forecast (Forecast), and a Wildfire Mitigation Scenarios Report (Report), as specified; and requires, contingent upon an appropriation, the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) to provide local assistance to local governments to achieve wildfire risk reduction consistent with the aforementioned plans, for defensible space inspections, and to facilitate compliance with forthcoming ember-resistant zone (known as zone zero) regulations, as specified.

Assembly Amendments require CAL FIRE to provide local assistance to local governments to achieve wildfire risk reduction consistent with the aforementioned plans, for defensible space inspections, and to facilitate compliance with forthcoming ember-resistant zone (known as zone zero) regulations, as specified.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the SFM, within CAL FIRE, and establishes the Deputy Director of Community Wildfire Preparedness and Mitigation (Deputy Director) within the OSFM, as specified.
- 2) Makes the Deputy Director responsible for fire preparedness and mitigation missions of Cal FIRE, as specified.
- 3) Requires the SFM to identify areas in the state as moderate, high, and very high fire hazard severity zones (FHSZs) based on consistent statewide criteria and the severity of fire hazard, as specified.

This bill:

- 1) Establishes, and defines as specified, the California Wildfire Mitigation Strategic Planning Act and makes establishes related definitions.
- 2) Requires, on or before January 1, 2027, and every three years thereafter, the Deputy Director, in consultation with the state hazard mitigation officer, to prepare a Framework sufficient to quantitatively evaluate wildfire risk mitigation actions as determined by the Deputy Director, as specified.
- 3) Requires, on or before April 1, 2027, and every three every three years thereafter, the Deputy Director, in consultation with the state hazard mitigation

officer, to prepare a Forecast for the State of California delineated on a statewide level and by county, and to include geographic specificity as determined by the Deputy Director to be sufficient to evaluate targeted wildfire risk mitigation actions, as specified.

- 4) Requires, on or before August 1, 2027, the Deputy Director, in consultation with the state hazard mitigation officer, to prepare a Wildfire Mitigation Scenarios Report, to be updated annually, as specified.
- 5) Requires CAL FIRE to develop and update the Framework, Forecast, and Report with a private consultant and administer additional local assistance grants, as specified.
- 6) Requires, contingent upon an annual appropriation by the Legislature in the annual Budget Act for the purposes of the Framework, Forecast, and Report, beginning in the 2029-30 fiscal year and extending to the 2044-45 fiscal year, inclusive, CAL FIRE to allocate funds for programs to be implemented by local governments to achieve wildfire risk reduction in a cost-effective manner that is maximally consistent with the Framework.
- 7) Authorizes, for fiscal years 2025-26 to 2028-29, inclusive, a local agency to submit an application to the Deputy Director to fund wildfire inspector positions sufficient to conduct inspections in Very High FHSZs (VHFHSZ). As a condition of receiving funds, requires a local agency to adopt, by an ordinance that is applicable to existing structures in VHFHSZs, the zone zero regulations as well as other requirements, as specified.
- 8) Requires, contingent upon an appropriation by the Legislature, in the annual Budget Act, beginning in the 2025-26 fiscal year and extending to the 2028-29 fiscal year, inclusive, CAL FIRE to allocate funds to facilitate early implementation of zone zero regulations for existing commercial and residential structures, and for other allowable purposes.
- 9) Requires the SFM to propose to extend the applicability of the building standards adopted pursuant to this section to all reconstruction of all buildings destroyed within the perimeters of a wildfire that occurs on and after July 1, 2026.
- 10) Expands the eligible activities under CAL FIRE's local assistance grant program for projects that plan and carry out risk-targeted wildfire prevention work within a local government's jurisdiction, as specified.

- 11) Requires the application of the ember-resistant zone regulation to take effect for: (1) an existing structure not used as a rental property, the requirement for an ember-resistant zone applies either upon the sale of that structure or three years after the regulatory effective date for a new structure, whichever comes first; and (2) an existing structure that is used as a rental property, the requirement for an ember-resistant zone applies on the same date as the effective date for a new structure.
- 12) Includes language to prevent a chaptering conflict with AB 1455 (Bryan), as specified.

Background

Author Statement. According to the author's office, "preventing catastrophic wildfire requires strong coordination between all of our investments. Building on current efforts, this bill would create a planning structure to maximize the effectiveness of California's work to reduce the impacts of wildfire. As California spends more to prevent catastrophic wildfire, we should also make sure that these investments go as far as possible in keeping residents safe. This bill creates a planning structure that does just that and ensures that all our efforts are well coordinated."

Community Wildfire Preparedness and Mitigation. The SFM's Community Wildfire Preparedness and Mitigation Division collaborates with federal, state, and local agencies, tribes, non-profit entities, and stakeholders to prepare California communities against wildfires. CAL FIRE develops strategies, conducts hazard inspections, and provides education and grants for wildfire prevention efforts, fostering prepared and resilient communities. Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) are collaboratively developed plans that focus on reducing wildfire risk to identified values. The California CWPP Toolkit provides important guidance and resources for CWPP development and implementation.

Wildfire Risk Mitigation Planning Framework. This bill requires the Deputy Director, on or before January 1, 2027 (and every three years thereafter), to prepare the Framework. The Framework serves as the strategic tool for quantitatively evaluating various wildfire mitigation actions, and is designed to facilitate geospatial analysis of mitigation efforts. It will detail critical elements such as the responsible entities, cost estimates, risk reduction efficiencies, and potential interactions with environmental and climate factors, thereby guiding coordinated efforts among multiple stakeholders. The Framework is intended to support long-term planning and effective allocation of resources in wildfire risk reduction.

Wildfire Risk Baseline and Forecast. On or before April 1, 2027 (and every three years thereafter), this bill requires the Deputy Director to prepare the Forecast for the State of California to provide a detailed, quantitative assessment of current wildfire risks and future projections across the state. The Forecast will delineate wildfire risks on both a statewide and county level, incorporating geographic specificity to assess potential impacts. It will include estimates of current ignition risks, evaluate potential consequences to life, property, and ecosystems, and establish key risk metrics with projections over one-year, three-year, and ten-year periods, serving as a benchmark for targeted mitigation strategies.

Wildfire Mitigation Scenarios Report. By August 1, 2027 (and annually thereafter), this bill requires the Deputy Director to prepare the Report focused on providing a comprehensive overview of potential future spending and strategic responses to mitigate wildfire risks. The Report will outline a range of scenarios for wildfire mitigation expenditures, detailing the planned actions by state agencies, utilities, local governments, and private actors. It will quantify the overall reduction in wildfire risk achieved through these actions and evaluate the cost-effectiveness of investments, offering recommendations to enhance coordination and maximize risk-spend efficiency across diverse mitigation initiatives.

Back to the Future. This bill is substantially similar to both SB 1014 (Dodd, 2024) and SB 436 (Dodd, 2023) each of which would have required either the Deputy Director or OES to create the Framework, Forecast, and Report. Those bills were held in the Assembly and Senate Appropriations Committees.

Prior/Related Legislation

SB 629 (Durazo, 2025) establishes a new post-wildfire safety area designation; requires the SFM to designate post-wildfire safety areas which trigger state fire protection standards; and requires FHSZs be based upon additional criteria, including post-wildfire safety areas, as specified. (Pending on the Senate Floor)

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

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee, costs of an unknown amount, potentially in the tens of millions of dollars, to CAL FIRE to develop and update the Framework, Forecast, and Report with a private consultant and administer additional local assistance grants (General Fund).

Annual cost pressures of an unknown amount, likely in the tens of millions of dollars, to CAL FIRE to provide additional local assistance grants to achieve wildfire risk reduction consistent with the Framework and support early compliance with zone zero regulations (General Fund, special fund, or Proposition 4). CAL FIRE notes that the local assistance grant program has been consistently funded since FY 2014-15, at amounts in the tens of millions of dollars to the one hundred million dollar range.

Annual costs of approximately \$260,000 to OES for at least one staff position to consult with CAL FIRE on the Framework, Forecast, and Report (General Fund). OES notes that costs may increase depending on the nature and evolution of the role.

Likely minor and absorbable costs to OEIS and the PUC to review and consider the Framework, Forecast, and Report, and the California Building Standards Commission to consider extending fire protection building standards to certain reconstructed buildings.

SUPPORT: (Verified 9/8/25)

California Environmental Voters
County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors
County of San Mateo
Independent Insurance Agents & Brokers of California, INC.
James Hardie
League of California Cities
Marin Clean Energy
Megafire Action
Pacific Forest Trust
Personal Insurance Federation of California
USGBC California
Vibrant Planet, a Public Benefit Corporation

OPPOSITION: (Verified 9/8/25)

None received

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: In support of this bill, Megafire Action writes that, “[f]or too long, wildfire mitigation has been defined by random acts of restoration—piecemeal efforts that lack a unified strategy for reducing the greatest threats to people, infrastructure, and ecosystems. Despite billions in spending and years of effort, the state still lacks a shared understanding of where wildfire risk is

highest at the parcel to acre-level, how it is changing as a result of successful mitigation projects, and which interventions offer the greatest return on investment.”

Further, “SB 326 has the potential to change that. By creating a Wildfire Risk Mitigation Planning Framework, establishing a Risk Baseline and Forecast, and requiring actionable Mitigation Scenarios, this bill builds the data foundation for a smarter, more targeted, and more accountable wildfire resilience strategy. Just as California uses earthquake fault maps and floodplain models to guide development and investment, this bill lays the groundwork for wildfire to be treated as the predictable, preventable hazard it is. That is a visionary shift.”

Prepared by: Brian Duke / G.O. / (916) 651-1530
9/12/25 20:40:51

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