

SENATE THIRD READING

SB 593 (Hurtado)

As Amended September 02, 2025

Majority vote

SUMMARY

Requires the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), by January 1, 2027, to require each investor-owned utility (IOU) to commence a study to evaluate significant voltage-related incidents, across its residential, commercial, and industrial customers that resulted in damage to customer-owned equipment, appliances, or property totaling \$5,000 or more, as provided. The bill also requires the CPUC, on or before July 1, 2027, to publish hyperlinks on its internet website to the studies, and to report on the studies to the Legislature.

Major Provisions**COMMENTS**

Voltage-Related Incidents. A "voltage-related incident" occurs when the electrical voltage delivered by a utility deviates abnormally from the standard operating range—for example, a spike (overvoltage) or a dip (undervoltage). Residential service is nominally 120 volts, with an allowable variation of $\pm 5\%$, meaning voltage should generally remain between 114 and 126 volts. As such, service outside this range can damage appliances, disrupt operations, and pose safety risks. Under current rules, IOUs must notify the CPUC's Safety and Enforcement Division within two hours of becoming aware of a reportable incident involving a fatality, serious injury, or property damage exceeding \$50,000. These reports must include information such as the date and location of the incident, the voltage level of the facilities involved, and the estimated damages.

Power Outages in Allensworth. In 2023, severe winter storms led to the reemergence of Tulare Lake, causing significant flooding and disruptions to electric infrastructure in the region. To maintain service to the community of Allensworth during the flood event, PG&E implemented an emergency reconfiguration of its distribution circuit, which involved relocating key equipment and rerouting power through a temporary arrangement. According to PG&E, this temporary configuration placed added strain on the system, leading to several momentary outages during periods of peak demand, when the circuit exceeded its available capacity. The circuit was restored to its normal configuration in September 2024, and PG&E reports that no further abnormalities have been observed since. While residents have raised concerns about repeated power surges and related damage to appliances, PG&E has reported that it received only one formal damage claim, which was resolved within 30 days.

Current Claim Processes. The IOUs have established claims processes through which customers can seek compensation for property damage. Claims are reviewed on a case-by-case basis, and utilities provide a decision within 30 days from the date of submission; however, more complex cases may require additional time. Compensation is limited to the lesser of the item's fair market value or the cost of repair. Customers may also be eligible for reimbursement through their insurance providers, which often cover such losses. If a customer is dissatisfied with the outcome of a claim submitted to an IOU—for example, if the claim is denied, delayed, or only partially compensated—they may file a complaint with the CPUC.

According to the Author

According to the author, "California ratepayers deserve transparency, accountability, and protection when it comes to voltage fluctuations that can cause significant damage and financial burdens for families already struggling with the high cost of living. Too often, families and businesses are left unaware when a damaging fluctuation in voltage occurs, only discovering the damage when their appliances, electronics, and other lifesaving systems stop working. These expensive repairs or replacements add unnecessary financial stress while leaving ratepayers with little recourse or support from utilities. SB 593 changes this by requiring the Public Utilities Commission and Publicly Owned Utilities to review electrical corporation's existing consumer protections related to these voltage events. SB 593 will provide much-needed additional consumer protections and by holding utilities accountable and ensuring transparency; provides peace of mind to millions of Californians who rely on HVAC systems, refrigerators, and other lifesaving medical devices."

Arguments in Support

This bill is supported by The Utility Reform Network (TURN) and the Allensworth Progressive Association, which both emphasize that the legislation will increase accountability and strengthen oversight of utility safety practices.

Arguments in Opposition

None on file.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Committee on Appropriations, the CPUC may need new resources to implement the bill. Because the work the bill creates is finite, costs to the CPUC should be limited to the time it takes the electric utilities to conduct the studies, to which the CPUC must provide electronic links.

VOTES**SENATE FLOOR: 38-0-2**

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

ABS, ABST OR NV: Limón, Reyes

ASM UTILITIES AND ENERGY: 18-0-0

YES: Petrie-Norris, Patterson, Boerner, Calderon, Chen, Davies, Mark González, Harabedian, Hart, Irwin, Kalra, Papan, Rogers, Schiavo, Schultz, Ta, Wallis, Zbur

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 11-0-4

YES: Wicks, Arambula, Calderon, Caloza, Elhawary, Fong, Mark González, Ahrens, Pacheco, Pellerin, Solache

ABS, ABST OR NV: Sanchez, Dixon, Ta, Tangipa

UPDATED

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