
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Anna Caballero, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

SB 742 (Pérez) - Electricity: electrical infrastructure: permanently abandoned transmission facilities: emergency response: liaisons

Version: January 15, 2026

Urgency: No

Hearing Date: January 20, 2026

Policy Vote: E., U. & C. 12 - 0

Mandate: Yes

Consultant: Ashley Ames

Bill Summary: This bill would require the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) to revise General Order (GO) 95 to require the removal of all permanently abandoned transmission facilities and ensure safety requirements for transmission facilities that are not removed as well as require the wildfire mitigation plans (WMPs) to include wildfire mitigation measures of abandoned transmission facilities. It would also require coordination by electric utilities with local emergency operations centers.

Fiscal Impact:

- Ongoing annual costs of \$200,000 to \$400,000 (ratepayer funds) to the Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety (OEIS) in order to modify wildfire mitigation plan guidelines and review wildfire mitigation plans consistent with the requirements of this bill.
- Ongoing annual costs of \$200,000 to \$400,000 (ratepayer funds) to the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) in order to address additional workload related to safety certifications and wildfire mitigation plan review.
- To the extent that utilities incur significant to implement the changes required by this bill, there could be costs to the state as a ratepayer. The state is an electrical customer, purchasing around 1% of the state's electricity. As such, any costs that may be recovered by ratepayers would also be borne in part by the state.

Background:

January 2025 Eaton Fire. In January 2025, with expected severe Santa Ana winds, low-humidity, high vegetation growth from previous wet winters, and dry conditions due to delayed precipitation, Southern California was at high risk for wildfires. Additionally, aerial fire suppression was limited by the extreme winds, which included gusts approaching 100 mph in some areas. The region experienced multiple fires, including the Palisades Fire and the Eaton Fire, two of the most destructive and deadly fires in the state's history. In the case of the Eaton Fire, the fire seems to have originated in the Eaton Canyon, just north of the foothill communities of Altadena and Sierra Madre in Southern California. Due to the high winds the fire seems to have quickly spread and engulfed much of Altadena and portions of Sierra Madre. The fire resulted in 19 deaths and destroyed more than 9,000 buildings, becoming the fifth deadliest and the second most destructive wildfire in California history. While the fire investigation as to the cause of the fire is still in process, there is widespread speculation, including by the CEO of the parent company of Southern California Edison (SCE), that the cause of the ignition

source may have been a dormant electrical transmission facility, one that has been out-of-service for 50 years. The speculation is that the out-of-service transmission line and its towers may have experienced induction – where electromagnetic fields from live circuits could have reenergized the dormant line, causing sparks and a potential ignition source. In this case, the speculation is that the dormant line experienced induction from active high-voltage transmission lines that may have been about 60-100 feet away, perhaps with failures in any grounding measures.

General Order 95. The CPUC in its oversight of public utilities, including electrical corporations, adopts and updates general orders which cover regulatory requirements such as the reporting of incidents, the safety requirements of utility infrastructure, and others. General orders are often updated, though not on a specific schedule or cadence. The CPUC is able to enforce the requirements of the general orders on the public utilities it regulates. GO 95 specifically addresses overhead electric line construction and includes numerous specific rules as to construction, operations, materials, clearance, and other standards and requirements for overhead electric line construction. Rule 31.6 of GO 95 specifically addresses abandoned lines – electric lines that are permanently out-of-service – and which are required to be removed by their owner in order to not become a public nuisance or a hazard to life or property. Rule 31.6 was last updated in 2005 (CPUC Decision 05-01-030) and defined abandoned lines as those that are determined by their owner to have no foreseeable future use. As a result of this definition, SCE has been able to maintain the dormant transmission line for over 50 years with the ability to claim the line would be used in the foreseeable future. As reported by the LA Times, the original proposed rule was changed in 2005 based on lobbying by the utilities. As a result, it is up to the utilities, the owners of the idle lines, to decide whether a facility is considered abandoned and should be removed, even when it has not been in service for over half a century.

Proposed Law: This bill would:

1. Require the CPUC, on or before January 1, 2028, to update General Order (GO) 95 to require each electrical corporation to remove all permanently abandoned facilities.
2. Require that an electrical corporation's WMP also include an accounting of all transmission facilities, including permanently abandoned transmission facilities.
3. Require that certain electrical corporations and local publicly owned electric utilities, in cooperation with OES and other emergency service agencies, to establish procedures for the coordination of efforts between electrical corporations and local publicly owned electric utilities and their representatives and those of emergency response agencies. Requires these electric utilities to assign liaison representatives to work within each local operations center.

Related Legislation:

SB 254 (Becker, Chapter 119, Statutes of 2025) included various proposals to address electric utility bill affordability and wildfire mitigation measures, including requiring electrical corporations to consider the time required to implement a wildfire mitigation measure and the amount of risk reduced for the costs and risk remaining.

SB 256 (Perez) of 2025, among its provisions, included similar language as this bill when it was heard in the Assembly. The bill was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

SB 1003 (Dodd) of 2024, included some provisions that are similar to those in SB 254 (Becker), would have modified timelines relevant to the WMPs by electrical corporations and required the electrical corporations to take into account both the time required to implement a mitigation measure, and the amount of risk reduced for the costs and risk remaining. The bill was held on the Assembly Floor.

SB 533 (Stern, Chapter 244, Statutes of 2021) required electrical corporations to identify circuits that have frequently been deenergized to mitigate the risk of wildfire and the measures taken to reduce the need for future deenergization of those circuits, as specified.

AB 1054 (Holden, Chapter 79, Statutes of 2019) included numerous provisions related to addressing wildfires caused by electric utility infrastructure, including: bolstering safety oversight and processes, recasting recovery of costs from damages to third parties, including the authorization for an electrical corporation and ratepayer jointly funded Wildfire Fund to address future damages.

SB 901 (Dodd, Chapter 626, Statutes of 2018) addressed numerous issues concerning wildfire prevention, response and recovery, including funding for mutual aid, fuel reduction and forestry policies, WMP by electric utilities, and cost recovery of wildfire-related damages by electrical corporations.

SB 1028 (Hill, Chapter 598, Statutes of 2016) required electrical corporations to file annual WMPs and requires the CPUC to review and comment on those plans.

AB 1650 (Portantino, Chapter 472, Statutes of 2012) required the CPUC to establish standards for disaster and emergency preparedness plans within an existing proceeding and authorizes every city and county within the electric IOUs' service area to designate a point of contact for the electrical IOU to consult on emergency disaster preparedness plans.

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