Date of Hearing: August 5, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
Buffy Wicks, Chair
SB 904 (Seyarto) – As Amended July 1, 2026

Policy Committee:	Housing and Community Development	Vote:	11 - 1
	Emergency Management		6 - 0

Urgency: No State Mandated Local Program: Yes Reimbursable: Yes

SUMMARY:

This bill requires the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD), following a declared state of emergency related to a wildfire, to provide reports to the Governor and Legislature identifying state permitting requirements, local procedures, and building codes that could be suspended or revised to support recovery and rebuilding efforts.

Among its major provisions, this bill:

1) If the Office of Emergency Services (OES), within 10 days after the date the Governor declares a state of emergency relating to a wildfire, makes a written determination that the wildfire caused substantial structural damage requiring significant rebuilding efforts, defined as the "destruction of 25 or more residential or commercial structures," requires HCD to:

   a) Provide a report to the Governor and the Legislature within 30 days of the written determination and in consultation with the Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (LCI), OES, and the Department of General Services (DGS), identifying state permitting requirements that may unduly impede rebuilding efforts and should be considered for suspension, and to update the report every 60 days as appropriate.

   b) Coordinate with local governments to recommend procedures to establish rapid permitting and approval processes to expedite the reconstruction or replacement of residential properties, with the goal of issuing all necessary permits and approvals within 30 days of submission.

   c) Provide a report to the Governor and the Legislature within 60 days of the written determination identifying recommended updates to local government procedures that achieve the goals identified in item b, above, and to update the report every 60 days.

2) Requires, by July 1, 2028, HCD, in consultation with DGS, the State Fire Marshal (SFM), and the California Energy Commission (CEC), to convene a workgroup to provide the Governor and Legislature recommendations regarding California Building Standards Code provisions that should be suspended to facilitate rebuilding and recovery guidance for any future state of emergency, and exempts from this consideration SFM standards relating to panic safety and fire safety.

3) Beginning January 1, 2028, requires each state and local agency involved in post-wildfire response and recovery to accept electronic submissions of recovery-related documentation

and to post on its website information regarding accepted filing methods, required file formats and filing support. Small cities and counties are exempt from this requirement.

FISCAL EFFECT:

1) HCD estimates ongoing General Fund (GF) costs in the low millions of dollars annually for eight to 11 positions across program, technical, and management classifications to support policy and construction standards analysis, IT support, interagency coordination, stakeholder engagement, and report development. Actual ongoing costs will depend on final staffing levels, the scope of reporting, and the frequency of wildfire emergencies, which will drive workload variability.

   HCD also estimates one-time GF costs, likely in the low hundreds of thousands of dollars, to make necessary IT improvements to expand electronic application capabilities within existing systems.

2) Estimated costs to the CEC in the low hundreds of thousands of dollars annually (Energy Resources Program Account) for additional staffing to review the Energy Code, make recommendations on standards to suspend, coordinate with HCD, and update the CEC website to provide guidance and the ability to submit forms electronically.

3) OES estimates minor and absorbable GF costs, including any costs to make written determinations that a Governor-declared wildfire disaster caused substantial structural damage requiring significant rebuilding efforts.

4) LCI, OES, DGS, and the SFM anticipate absorbable GF costs to consult with HCD on specified reports to the Governor and Legislature.

5) Costs to affected local agencies of an unknown, but potentially significant amount related to the requirement to accept electronic submissions of recovery-related documentation. These costs are potentially state-reimbursable, subject to a determination by the Commission on State Mandates.

COMMENTS:

1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

   > In January 2025, the Palisades Fire and other Los Angeles County wildfires destroyed thousands of homes and upended entire neighborhoods. Executive Order N-4-25 responded with decisive coordination by suspending duplicative barriers, aligning state and local agencies, and setting a clear goal of issuing necessary permits within 30 days so families could begin rebuilding. [This bill] ensures that this level of urgency is not dependent on a single executive order and strengthens interagency collaboration, so recovery does not stall in bureaucracy.

2) **Background.** In January 2025, Los Angeles County experienced two of the most destructive wildfires in state history. The Palisades fire burned a total of 23,448 acres and damaged or destroyed almost 8,000 structures in the Pacific Palisades and Topanga State Park area of

west Los Angeles. The Eaton fire consumed 14,021 acres and damaged or destroyed more than 10,000 structures, including significant portions of the city of Altadena. An estimated 9,592 single family homes and condominiums, 678 apartment units, 2,210 duplex and bungalow courts, and 373 mobilehomes were either heavily damaged or destroyed.

During and following the outbreak of the Eaton and Palisades fires, Governor Newsom proclaimed a state of emergency in Los Angeles and Ventura counties. Following the proclamation, Governor Newsom issued 25 executive orders (EOs) to aid recovery, protect survivors, expedite wildfire safety regulations, and facilitate wildfire prevention projects. The third order, EO N-4-25, issued January 12, 2025, exempted work to rebuild devastated areas from environmental review and provided other directives aimed at rebuilding in impacted areas.

This bill codifies two of these directives by asking HCD, upon a declared state of emergency resulting in substantial structural damage, to coordinate with state and local agencies to identify permitting requirements and approval processes that may be waived or suspended to facilitate rebuilding and recovery efforts. This bill also codifies a variation of a third directive, which asked HCD to coordinate with state agencies to recommend provisions of building codes and regulations that should be suspended for certain projects to aid in recovery efforts. Rather than having this task occur upon a declared state of emergency, this bill instead requires HCD to convene a working group to provide a report with these recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature by July 1, 2028, and to update the report as needed for ongoing use.

Finally, to further facilitate rapid recovery and rebuilding following a wildfire, but not resulting from an EO, this bill also requires state and local agencies involved in post-disaster response, debris removal, reconstruction, housing, or land-use permitting, starting January 1, 2028, to accept electronic submission of any applications, forms, or other documents related to recovery efforts for that state of emergency.

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