SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY, UTILITIES AND COMMUNICATIONS
Senator Ben Hueso, Chair
2019 - 2020 Regular

Bill No:	SB 209	**Hearing Date:**	4/24/2019
Author:	Dodd		
Version:	4/11/2019 As Amended		
Urgency:	No	**Fiscal:**	Yes
Consultant:	Nidia Bautista		

SUBJECT: Wildfire: California Wildfire Warning Center: weather monitoring

DIGEST: This bill establishes the California Wildfire Warning Center (CAWWC), as specified, and requires the Center to have various responsibilities relating to fire-threat weather conditions, including a statewide fire weather forecasting, monitoring, and threat assessment system.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

1) Establishes the Office of Emergency Services (OES) in the office of the Governor and provides that OES is responsible for the state's emergency and disaster response services for natural, technological, or manmade disasters and emergencies. (Government Code §8550 et seq.)

2) Establishes the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) and authorizes the CPUC to establish rules for all public utilities, subject to control by the Legislature. (California Constitution, Article XII)

3) Establishes the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal FIRE) and provides that Cal FIRE is responsible for the fire protection, fire prevention, maintenance, and enhancement of the state's forest, range, and bushland resources, contract fire protection, associated emergency services, and assistance in civil disasters and other non-fire emergencies. (Public Resources Code §700 et seq.)

4) Requires each electrical corporation (IOU) to construct, maintain, and operate its electrical lines and equipment in a manner that will minimize the risk of catastrophic wildfire posed by those electrical lines and equipment. Requires each IOU to annually prepare and submit a wildfire mitigation plan to the CPUC for review and approval, as specified. (Public Utilities Code §8386)

This bill:

1) Establishes the CAWWC Center with 10 representatives, including two each from the CPUC, OES, Cal FIRE, one from an IOU and one from a publicly owned electric utility (POU).

2) Requires the CAWWC to be responsible for ongoing monitoring of fire-weather and threat conditions, receiving and verifying information pertaining to fire threat conditions, overseeing the development and deployment of a statewide network of automated weather and environmental stations, in areas not covered by a weather network belonging to an IOU or local POU, designed to observe mesoscale meteorological phenomena that contribute to increased wildfire risk.

3) Requires IOUs and electrical POUs to share weather data from their weather networks with the CAWWC.

4) Requires the CAWWC to oversee the development and deployment of a statewide Mesonet deployment plan that will interface effectively with, and without disruption to, an IOU's and a POU's own systems.

5) Requires the CAWWC to coordinate with each electrical IOU and POU to determine the optimum deployment of weather monitoring stations on their networks, starting the CPUC Tier 3 high-fire threat districts, and followed by Tier 2 districts.

Background

Mesoscale meteorological phenomena. Mesoscale meteorological phenomena are weather systems smaller than synoptic scale systems (horizontal length of about 600 miles or more) such as high and low-pressure areas, and larger than short-lived microscale phenomena (horizontal length of about a mile or less) such as small and generally fleeting cloud "puffs" and other small cloud features. Examples of mesoscale phenomena include thunderstorms, gap winds, downslope windstorms, and land-sea breezes. Recent advances in observational and numerical modeling capabilities have greatly improved the tools used by atmospheric scientists to study mesoscale weather systems.

The author points out that currently only San Diego County has a high-density network of weather stations that collect real time wind information, and that wind is critical for understanding behavior of wildfires, is highly localized, and varies greatly with topography. This bill would consolidate fire-weather monitoring, and

potentially significantly increase the number of weather stations capable of monitoring weather and wind information throughout the state.

Similar centers in state government. Last year, AB 2813 (Irwin, Chapter 768, Statutes of 2018) statutorily established the California Cybersecurity Integration Center (Cal-CSIC) within OES. Cal-CSIC is comprised of representatives from various statewide emergency offices, California's higher education systems, and federal security agencies. Cal-CSIC is charged with reducing the likelihood and severity of a damaging cyber incident in California, serves as the "central organizing hub" of state government's cybersecurity activities, and coordinates information sharing with a variety of government agencies.

Interaction with electric utilities. This bill attempts to increase the state's situation awareness and weather monitoring to better reduce, mitigate, and respond to wildfires. As the state has experienced several large and catastrophic fires, efforts to better respond to wildfire risks are appropriate. As currently drafted, this bill attempts to have the CAWWC work in complimentary fashion with electric IOUs and POUs. This bill's approach seems generally appropriate in relation to the IOUs who have made (San Diego Gas & Electric) or are making heavy investments to improve their weather monitoring and general situation awareness to reduce, mitigate, and better respond to wildfires. However, such level of investments are generally more limited in the case of POUs and smaller IOUs. As this bill moves forward, the author may wish to address these nuances in this bill, while not reducing what is already required of POUs and smaller IOUs to mitigate their fire risk. Additionally, *the author may wish to narrow the universe of POUs that must be represented on the CAWWC to those from POUs that have a Tier 3 or Tier 2 fire threat as identified in the Cal FIRE/CPUC map. The author may wish to have an alternative appointing authority, instead of the CPUC, in relation to POUs.*

Prior/Related Legislation

SB 133 (Galgiani, 2019) provides that it is the intent of the Legislature to enact legislation to create and fund a program for installing remote infrared cameras that can help in detecting wildfires. The bill is pending referral in the Senate Committee on Rules.

AB 2813 (Irwin, Chapter 768, Statues of 2018) codified in statute Cal-CSIC, within OES, and required Cal-CSIC to develop a cybersecurity strategy for California, as specified.

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, wildfire mitigation plans by electric utilities, and cost recovery by electric corporations of wildfire-related damages.

SB 1260 (Jackson, Chapter 624, Statutes of 2018) was an omnibus fire prevention and forestry management bill, that among other things, created new opportunities for public and private land managers to mitigate wildfire risks, and enhanced Cal FIRE's role in identifying wildfire hazards as local governments plan for new housing and neighborhoods.

AB 289 (Gray, Chapter 106, Statutes of 2017) required OES to update the State Emergency Plan on or before January 1, 2019, and every five years thereafter.

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

SUPPORT:

Allstate
California Fire Chiefs Association
California Insurance Wholesalers Association
California State Association of Counties
Fire Districts Association of California
Independent Insurance Agents & Brokers of California
League of California Cities
Pacific Gas and Electric Company
Rural County Representatives of California
San Diego Gas & Electric, if amended
Sierra Club California
Sonoma Water

OPPOSITION:

None received

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: According to the author:

> "A variety of public and private networks exist to gauge fire threat potential, but there is no systematic statewide program ensuring that such information gets to decision makers, such as first responders or electric utilities, who are responsible for making operational decisions that can reduce wildfire risk,

and prepare for immediate response with appropriate prepositioned resources, should a wildfire ignite. SB 209 addresses these deficiencies by 1) requiring the deployment of a state-wide network of automated weather and environmental monitoring stations designed to observe mesoscale meteorological phenomena, specifically conditions that increase the threat of wildfires…"

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