

Date of Hearing: April 28, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Rhodesia Ransom, Chair

AB 1200 (Caloza) – As Amended April 23, 2025

SUBJECT: Emergency services: disaster preparedness

SUMMARY: Requires the Seismic Safety Commission to establish the State Lifelines Council and the California Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) to conduct biennial, statewide tabletop exercises that simulate large-scale disasters and evaluate California's disaster response capabilities. These scenario-based drills will involve participation from government agencies, nonprofit organizations, local community groups, critical infrastructure operators, and private partners. The exercises must be grounded in existing state and FEMA catastrophic disaster plans and aim to test and improve coordination, communication, logistics, and support for vulnerable populations during emergencies. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires the Seismic Safety Commission to enter into a partnership with the Strategic Growth Council and the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection to establish the State Lifelines Council to identify the investments the State of California should make to ensure a rapid recovery from a major disaster.
- 2) Requires the State Lifelines Council to complement the work of local and regional lifelines councils and bring lifeline providers together to develop a unified set of post-event performance standards, both individually and collectively, for public and private utility providers.
- 3) Requires Cal OES, biennially, to convene key personnel and agencies that have emergency management roles and responsibilities to participate in tabletop exercises in which the participant's emergency preparedness plans are discussed and evaluated under various simulated catastrophic disaster situations.
- 4) Requires Cal OES to invite governmental agencies, educational entities, military installations, private businesses, and nonprofit organizations that operate or own concerns in various sectors that provide fundamental services in the community that, when stabilized, enable all other aspects of society to function to participate in the tabletop exercises. At a minimum, these sectors include:
 - (a) Law enforcement, private security, fire suppression services, search and rescue, government services, and community safety.
 - (b) Food, water, shelter, and agriculture.
 - (c) Medical care, public health, patient transportation, medical supply providers, and fatality management.
 - (d) Utilities and fuel.
 - (e) Infrastructure, emergency responder communications, alerts, warnings and safety messages, finance, 911 emergency response systems, and dispatch.

- (f) Hazardous materials management, facilities, pollutants, and contaminants.
 - (g) Transportation infrastructure, motor vehicles, mass transit, and railway, aviation, and maritime transportation.
- 3) Requires the disaster situations be based on the catastrophic plans for major earthquakes and floods, as specified.
- 4) Requires tabletop exercises designed by Cal OES enhance the capabilities of the participants to do, at a minimum, four of the following:
- (a) Plan to engage the communities that they each serve, as appropriate, in the development of executable strategic, operational, or tactical-level approaches to meet defined disaster response objectives.
 - (b) Provide coordinated, prompt, reliable, and actionable information through the use of clear, consistent, accessible, and culturally and linguistically appropriate methods to effectively relay information regarding any threat or hazard, as well as the actions being taken and the assistance being made available, as appropriate.
 - (c) Establish and maintain a unified and coordinated operational structure and process that appropriately integrates all critical stakeholders and supports the execution of core capabilities.
 - (d) Manage the security and resilience of supply chains that deliver essential commodities, equipment, and services in support of impacted communities and survivors, including emergency power and fuel support, as well as the coordination of access to community staples. Synchronize logistics capabilities and enable the restoration of impacted supply chains.
 - (e) Conduct appropriate measures to ensure the protection of the health and safety of the public and workers, as well as the environment, from all hazards in support of responder operations and the affected communities.
 - (f) Provide transportation, including infrastructure access and accessible transportation services, for response priority objectives, including the evacuation of people and animals, and the delivery of vital response personnel, equipment, and services into the affected areas.
 - (g) Provide decision-makers with relevant information regarding the nature and extent of the hazard, cascading effects, and the status of the response.
 - (h) Provide fatality management services, including decedent remains recovery and victim identification, working with local, state, tribal, territorial, insular area, and federal authorities to provide mortuary processes, temporary storage, or permanent internment solutions, sharing information with mass care services for the purpose of reunifying family members and caregivers with missing persons or their remains, and providing counseling to the bereaved.
 - (i) Provide structural, wildland, and specialized firefighting capabilities to manage and suppress fires of all types, kinds, and complexities while protecting the lives, property, and environment in the affected area.
 - (j) Stabilize critical infrastructure functions, minimize health and safety threats, and efficiently restore and revitalize systems and services to support a viable, resilient community.
 - (k) Provide life-sustaining and human services to the affected population, including hydration, feeding, sheltering, temporary housing, evacuee support, reunification, and distribution of emergency supplies.

- (l) Deliver traditional and atypical search and rescue capabilities, including personnel, services, animals, and assets, to survivors in need, with the goal of saving the greatest number of endangered lives in the shortest time possible.
 - (m) Ensure a safe and secure environment through law enforcement and related security and protection operations for people and communities located within affected areas and also for response personnel engaged in lifesaving and life-sustaining operations.
 - (n) Ensure the capacity for timely communications in support of security, situational awareness, and operations, by any and all means available, among and between affected communities in the impact area and all response forces.
 - (o) Provide lifesaving medical treatment via emergency medical services and related operations and avoid additional disease and injury by providing targeted public health, medical, and behavioral health support and products to all affected populations.
 - (p) Restore and improve health and social services capabilities and networks to promote the resilience, independence, health, including behavioral health, and well-being of the whole community.
 - (q) Return economic and business activities, including food and agriculture, to a healthy state and develop new business and employment opportunities that result in an economically viable community.
 - (r) Protect natural and cultural resources and historic properties through appropriate planning, mitigation, response, and recovery actions to preserve, conserve, rehabilitate, and restore them consistent with post-disaster community priorities and best practices and in compliance with applicable environmental and historic preservation laws.
- 5) Requires Cal OES to report on each tabletop exercise it conducts pursuant to this section to the committees on budget, the Assembly Committee on Emergency Management, and the Senate Committee on Governmental Organization by February 1, 2028, and biennially thereafter of the calendar year following each biennial simulation and evaluation.
- 6) Directs Cal OES, to the greatest extent possible, use federal preparedness grant funding to offset the state, local, and tribal government costs associated with participation in the tabletop exercises described in this section.
- 7) Requires Cal OES, in cooperation with California Volunteers, to coordinate annually with local Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) programs to conduct community disaster preparedness training in vulnerable regions of the state, based on data from the Federal Emergency Management Agency's National Risk Index and a community vulnerability index, or similar risk assessment tools, as specified.
- 8) Requires Cal OES and California Volunteers to ensure that the annual training conducted pursuant to this section is coordinated with any established CERT program serving the region in which the training takes place and do the following:
- (a) Emphasize actions to increase community resilience to disasters, utilize community green or open space for drills and preparedness activities whenever feasible, and promote inclusive engagement of community members, including individuals with disabilities and those from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.
 - (b) Include testing of community emergency notification systems in the area. The Office of Emergency Services shall prioritize testing in communities that have experienced past challenges with emergency alerts or evacuation warnings, including those observed during recent wildfires in the state.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the Seismic Safety Commission as a separate unit within Cal OES, and may recommend policies, hold meetings, hold hearings, set dates of the meetings or hearings, and positions on proposed state and federal legislation. The commission shall retain authority to issue reports, publications, and literature.
- 2) Requires the Seismic Safety Commission to, at a minimum, to report annually to the Governor and the Legislature on its findings, progress, and recommendations related to activities of the commission and the state toward higher levels of seismic safety and any other seismic safety issues. (Government Code Section 8589.75)
- 3) Establishes the California Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) within the office of the Governor and makes Cal OES responsible for the state's emergency and disaster response services for natural, technological, or manmade disasters and emergencies. (Gov. Code Section 8550)
- 4) Authorizes the Governor to proclaim a state of emergency and local officials and local governments to proclaim a local emergency, when specified conditions of disaster or extreme peril to the safety of persons and property exist, and authorizes the Governor or the appropriate local government to exercise certain powers in response to that emergency. (Gov. Code Section 8558)
- 5) Defines "state of emergency" and "local emergency" to mean a duly proclaimed existence of conditions of disaster or of extreme peril to the safety of persons and property within the state or territorial limits of a local government caused by, among other things, a sudden and severe energy shortage. (Gov. Code Section 8558)
- 6) Requires the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) for managing multiagency and multijurisdictional responses to emergencies in California. State agencies are required to use SEMS and local government entities must use SEMS in order to be eligible for any reimbursement of response-related costs under the state's disaster assistance programs. (Gov. Code Section 8607)
- 7) Requires Cal OES to complete and after-action report within 180 days after each declared disaster. (Gov. Code Section 8607)
- 8) Establishes the FIREScope Program, under Cal OES, to maintain and enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of managing multiagency firefighting resources in responding to an incident, as specified. (Health and Safety Code Section 13071)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown. This bill has not been analyzed by a fiscal committee.

COMMENTS:

Purpose of the bill: According to the author, "As disasters grow more frequent and severe, California must regularly go beyond written plans and into practiced preparedness. AB 1200 requires the state to convene realistic, multi-agency tabletop disaster drills every two years.

These exercises will simulate catastrophic emergencies and identify weaknesses in coordination, communication, and outreach- especially for our most vulnerable residents. When emergencies hit, every minute counts and all responders play a critical role. Practicing our response in advance will save time, resources, and lives. AB 1200 is about making sure that when the next big emergency strikes, Californians are ready."

Equity impact: According to the author's staff, "As we have seen in many recent emergencies, disasters disproportionately affect vulnerable populations such as older adults, individuals with disabilities, low-income households, limited English proficiency communities, and people experiencing homelessness. These communities often face barriers to timely information, evacuations, aid, and recovery. AB 1200 includes a deliberate focus on equity. The tabletop exercises must include objectives centered on vulnerable populations, ensuring emergency response plans account for their specific needs. The bill also requires annual CERT training in high-risk, high-vulnerability regions, identified through risk indices. This ensures at-risk communities are not only considered in planning but are actively engaged and better prepared."

Background: California continues to face increasingly complex and destructive disasters including fires, floods, earthquakes, and atmospheric storms. In 2024 alone, wildfires in the Palisades and Eaton Canyon areas overwhelmed emergency systems and revealed gaps in response coordination. While California has developed strong response plans in collaboration with FEMA, there is no formal requirement to regularly test these plans through joint, interagency exercises.

Without recurring drills, key agencies, sectors, and responders may not be fully prepared when disaster strikes. Issues like miscommunication, logistical delays, or overlooked vulnerable populations have emerged repeatedly in after-action reports. The California State Auditor has also identified shortcomings in preparedness for vulnerable communities.

2025 Los Angeles Fires: In January 2025, Los Angeles County experienced the second and third most destructive fires in California history: the Palisades Fire and Eaton Fire. AccuWeather estimates these fires' total damage and economic loss to be between \$250 billion and \$275 billion. At its height, the fires placed an estimated 331,335 people on an evacuation advisory, with nearly 192,000 residents facing mandatory evacuation and roughly 140,000 subject to warnings. The blazes burned a combined 37,469 acres and leveled entire communities in the Pacific Palisades and Altadena neighborhoods of LA County.

The Eaton Fire became the second most destructive fire in California history after destroying 9,418 buildings, 1,074 structures damaged, and 17 confirmed civilian fatalities. The Palisades Fire is the third most destructive fire in state history, with 6,837 structures destroyed, 973 structures damaged, and 12 confirmed civilian fatalities. As firefighters were battling the largest conflagrations, additional fires broke out in the Los Angeles area. Crews were able to stop the forward spread and contain the blazes. These fires included the Lidia, Archer, Woodley, Sunset, Kenneth, Hurst, and Auto fires, which burned close to 2,400 acres between them. Two weeks after the initial fires, the Hughes Fire began near Castaic Lake in northern Los Angeles County on January 22 and grew to over 10,000 acres. Firefighters fully contained the fire on January 30 after covering 10,425 acres.

Emergency Preparedness and Response: Cal OES is responsible for addressing natural, technological, or manmade disasters and emergencies, and preparing the State to prevent,

respond to, quickly recover from, and mitigate the effects of both intentional and natural disasters. As part of their overall preparedness mission, Cal OES is required to develop a State Emergency Plan (SEP) and State Hazard Mitigation Plan (SHMP); maintain the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) and the Emergency Management Mutual Aid System (EMMA); and assist counties with their local Emergency Operation Plans (EOP). Cal OES, in coordination with FEMA and local partners, has developed four Catastrophic Plans to augment the State Emergency Plan.

State Emergency Plan: The SEP describes how response to natural or human- caused emergencies occurs in California. The plan is a requirement of the California Emergency Services Act (ESA), and describes methods for conducting emergency operations, the process for rendering mutual aid, emergency services of government agencies, how resources are mobilized, how the public is informed, and how continuity of government is maintained during emergency. The SEP further describes hazard mitigation, as well as preparedness and recovery from disasters. The SEP defines Emergency Support Functions (ESF) which are discipline- specific groups that develop functional annexes to set goals, objectives, operational concepts, capabilities, organization structures, and related policies and procedures. Under the SEP, there are 18 ESFs led by a state agency and represent an alliance of state government and other stakeholders with similar functional responsibilities:

CA EMERGENCY SUPPORT FUNCTIONS	LEAD STATE AGENCY
CA-ESF 1 Transportation	CA Transportation Agency
CA-ESF 2 Communication	Governor's Office of Emergency Services
CA-ESF 3 Construction and Engineering	Government Operations Agency
CA-ESF 4 Fire and Rescue	Governor's Office of Emergency Services
CA-ESF 5 Management	Governor's Office of Emergency Services
CA-ESF 6 Care and Shelter	CA Health and Human Services Agency
CA-ESF 7 Resources	Government Operations Agency
CA-ESF 8 Public Health and Medical	CA Health and Human Services Agency
CA-ESF 9 Search and Rescue	Merged with ESF 13 Law and ESF 4 Fire.
CA-ESF 10 Hazardous Materials	CA Environmental Protection Agency
CA-ESF 11 Food and Agriculture	CA Department of Food and Agriculture
CA-ESF 12 Utilities	CA Natural Resources Agency
CA-ESF 13 Law Enforcement	Governor's Office of Emergency Services
CA-ESF 14 Recovery	Governor's Office of Emergency Services
CA-ESF 15 Public Information	Governor's Office of Emergency Services
CA-ESF 16 Evacuation	Merged with CA-ESF 13/Law Enforcement
CA-ESF 17 Volunteer/Donations Mgmt.	California Volunteers
CA-ESF 18 Cybersecurity	Governor's Office of Emergency Services

Catastrophic Plans: California's catastrophic plans establish the joint federal and state response to and recovery from catastrophic events. Four Catastrophic Plans exist: the Northern California Catastrophic Flood Response Plan, the Bay Area Earthquake Plan, the Cascadia Subduction Zone Earthquake and Tsunami Response Plan, and the Southern California Catastrophic Earthquake Response Plan. Cal OES trains and exercises for the scenarios outlined in these plans and works with FEMA to update them every five years, ensuring that state and federal agencies are aligned when disaster strikes.

Master Mutual Aid Agreement (MMAA): The Master Mutual Aid Agreement is an agreement made and entered into by and between the State of California, its various departments and agencies, and the various political subdivisions, municipal corporations, and other public agencies of the State of California to facilitate implementation of Chapter 7 of Division 1 of Title 2 of the Government Code entitled "California Emergency Services Act." Mutual aid agreements and the operational plans that support them, guide the sending and receiving parties in managing and providing effective aid to other operational areas in need. These plans are essential to identify specific resources, tasks, personnel, asset allocations, roles, responsibilities, integration, and actions that mutual aid participants execute respective to their assignments.

Community Lifelines: FEMA created Community Lifelines to reframe incident information, understand and communicate incident impacts using plain language, and promote unity of effort across the whole community to prioritize efforts to stabilize the lifelines during incident response. While lifelines were developed to support response planning and operations, the concept can be applied across the entire preparedness cycle.

Efforts to protect lifelines, prevent and mitigate potential impacts to them, and build back stronger and smarter during recovery will drive overall resilience of the nation. Applying the lifelines construct allows decision-makers to: (1) prioritize, sequence, and focus response efforts towards maintaining or restoring the most critical services and infrastructure; (2) utilize a common lexicon to facilitate unity of purpose among all stakeholders; (3) promote a response that facilitates unity of purpose and better communication among the whole community (federal, state, tribal, territorial, and local governments, and private sector and non-governmental entities); and (4) clarify which components of the disaster are complex or complicated, requiring cross-sector coordination.

Lifelines are used to: enhance the ability to gain, maintain, and communicate situational awareness for the whole community in responding to disasters; analyze impacts to the various lifelines and develop priority focus areas for each operational period during response; and identify and communicate complex interdependencies to identify major limiting factors hindering stabilization.

Related Legislation: AB 239 (Harabedian, 2025) of this session. Would establish the State-Led County of Los Angeles Disaster Housing Task Force. (Pending in the Assembly Committee on Appropriations)

AB 591 (Caloza) of this Session. Requires the California Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES), in consultation with relevant local and state public works agencies, to develop and adopt a Public Works Emergency Mutual Aid Plan to ensure the systematic and efficient mobilization of public works resources during emergencies. (Set to be heard in the Assembly Committee on Emergency Management on April 28, 2025)

AB 1284 (Committee on Emergency Management) of this Session. Requires the Cal OES to develop a state recovery framework and assist local governments in the development of regional recovery frameworks for California's existing catastrophic plans and plans for Catastrophic Wildfires in the Wildland Urban Interface. (Pending in the Assembly Committee on Appropriations)

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on file.

Opposition

None on file.

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