

Date of Hearing: April 7, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Rhodesia Ransom, Chair

AB 1284 (Committee on Emergency Management) – As Introduced February 21, 2025

SUBJECT: Emergency services: catastrophic plans: recovery frameworks

SUMMARY: Requires the California Office of Emergency Services (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. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires Cal OES to develop a state recovery framework and assist local governments in the development of regional recovery frameworks for California's catastrophic plans.
- 2) Directs Cal OES to, the greatest extent possible, use federal preparedness grant funding to offset the state, local, and tribal government costs associated with developing the recovery frameworks
- 3) Specifies catastrophic plans include the disaster response plans developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Cal OES: the Northern California Catastrophic Flood Response Plan (NCCFRP); the Bay Area Earthquake Plan; the Cascadia Subduction Zone -Earthquake and Tsunami Response Plan; the Southern California Earthquake Response Plan; and Catastrophic Wildfires in the Wildland Urban Interface.
- 4) Requires state and regional recovery frameworks shall be completed no later than January 15, 2027.
- 5) Requires recovery frameworks be consistent with the latest guidance from FEMA and incorporate lessons learned from recent major disasters.
- 6) Recovery frameworks shall include, at a minimum, include the following recovery support functions that comprise the coordinating structure for key functional areas of assistance in the National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF):
 - (a) Economic Recovery – This support function focuses on the ability to return economic and business activities (including agricultural) to a state of health and develop new economic opportunities that result in a sustainable and economically viable community.
 - (b) Health and Social Services – This support function recognizes healthcare is an economic driver in many communities, which if damaged make this sector critical to most communities' disaster recovery. Social Services have a major impact on the ability of a community to recover. The support of social services programs for at-risk and vulnerable children, individuals, and families affected by a disaster can promote a more effective and rapid recovery.

(c) Infrastructure Systems – This support function works to efficiently facilitate the restoration of infrastructure systems and services to support a viable, sustainable community and improves resilience to and protection from future hazards.

(d) Housing – This support function coordinates and facilitates the delivery of Federal resources to implement housing solutions that effectively support the needs of the whole community and contribute to its sustainability and resilience. Housing is a critical and often challenging component of disaster recovery, but must be adequate, affordable, and accessible to make a difference for the whole community.

(e) Community Planning and Capacity Building Recovery – This support function strives to restore and strengthen state, territorial, tribal, and local governments' ability to plan for recovery, engage the community in the recovery planning process and build capacity for local plan implementation and recovery management. Recovery planning in the post-disaster environment builds short- and long-term community resilience, empowers local leaders and stakeholders and improves recovery outcomes for the individual and the community.

(f) Natural & Cultural Resources – This support function facilitates the integration of capabilities of the federal government to support the protection of natural and cultural resources and historic properties through appropriate response and recovery actions to preserve, conserve, rehabilitate, and restore them consistent with post-disaster community priorities and in compliance with applicable environmental and historical preservation laws and Executive Orders.

7) Includes an urgency clause.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) 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 § 8550)
- 2) 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 § 8558)
- 3) 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 § 8558)
- 4) 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 § 8607)

- 5) Requires Cal OES to complete and after-action report within 180 days after each declared disaster. (Gov. Code § 8607)
- 6) 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 § 13071)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown. A fiscal committee has not heard this bill.

COMMENTS:

Purpose of the bill: According to the author, “Given the vast array of natural disaster risks our communities face, prioritizing recovery planning is not just important—it is imperative. Over the past decade, we have endured catastrophic, record-breaking disasters, including the Palisades and Eaton fires in Los Angeles. These disasters underscore the urgent need to ensure our emergency management systems integrate hard-earned lessons so that our neighborhoods can recover swiftly and effectively from future catastrophes.”

The author continued, “In California, the question is not if a major earthquake, wildfire, or flood will strike, but when. While the state has developed four catastrophic disaster plans to supplement the State Emergency Plan (SEP), any one of these events could overwhelm our mutual aid system and put our recovery capabilities to the ultimate test. Furthermore, catastrophic wildfire response and recovery in the Wildland-Urban Interface must be fully integrated into our catastrophic planning efforts. This bill is critical to ensuring that California is not only prepared to respond to disasters but also equipped to recover rapidly and build long-term resilience.”

Equity Impact: According to the author's staff, “As determined by a report from the State Auditor in 2019, California is not prepared to protect its most vulnerable residents from natural disasters. When an emergency strikes, vulnerable populations, including low income individuals, undocumented individuals, and access and functional needs populations, face the highest risk. This bill will ensure proper recovery resources are available for the most catastrophic of scenarios, thus ensuring emergency impacts to vulnerable populations are significantly mitigated.”

Background: In written testimony provided to the House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations in 2022, California's OES Director stated, “the State of California arguably faces the most complex and severe disaster conditions in the nation and these challenges and complexities grow in magnitude each year. In the past decade, California has experienced every conceivable type of natural and manmade disaster including drought, earthquake, flood, catastrophic wildfire, mudslides, dam failure, cyber security attacks, oil spills, natural gas leak, civil unrest, terrorism, and tsunamis. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has put our emergency management system to the test.”

There are four Catastrophic Plans. They include 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. There is no current Catastrophic Plan related to wildfires, which this bill would address by including a recovery framework for Catastrophic Wildfires in the Wildland Urban Interface, in addition to the four existing Catastrophic Plans.

Unprecedented Wildfires: Wildfires are a severe and growing threat to lives, property, and infrastructure in California. The confluence of a changing climate, urbanization, and constraints on forest management has added urgency to the need to enhance our strategy to address this threat. In Cal FIRE's 2020 Fire Siege Report, the Director states, "At the end of 2020, we closed the book on, arguably, the worst fire year ever experienced on the west coast, and specifically in California. Since 2015, the term "unprecedented" has been used year over year as conditions have worsened, and the operational reality of a changing climate sets in.

According to data from CAL FIRE, 15 of California's 20 most destructive fires have occurred in the past decade. Collectively, these most recent fires have resulted in 180 deaths and the loss of 57,483 structures (homes, outbuildings, and commercial properties). While fewer wildfires threatened California in 2023 due to the increased number of weather events and atmospheric rivers, the vegetative growth from the significant rainfall contributed to devastating wildfires in 2024 and 2025. In 2024, the Park Fire became the fourth-largest fire in California's history. Despite aggressive initial attack suppression efforts, the fire rapidly expanded, ultimately consuming 429,603 acres across Butte and Tehama counties. The Park Fire led to the destruction of 709 structures and damage to 54 others, prompting widespread evacuations and the temporary closure of Lassen Volcanic National Park. In 2025, Los Angeles County experienced two of the most destructive wildfires in history (discussed below).

As the state continues adapting to climate change, including the increasing likelihood of extreme Fire Weather Index conditions, it will be essential to establish programs and policies that help reduce the risk of loss during a fire.

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.

Probability of Strong and/or Major Earthquakes: The United States Geological Survey and other scientists estimate a 72-percent probability that at least one earthquake of Magnitude 6.7 or greater, capable of causing widespread damage, will strike the San Francisco Bay Area before 2044. For the Los Angeles region, the same model forecasts a 60-percent probability that an earthquake of Magnitude 6.7 or greater will occur before 2044.

Strong earthquakes of Magnitude 6 to 6.9 strike California, on average, once every two to three years. An earthquake of this size, such as the 1994 Northridge Earthquake (Magnitude 6.7) or the 1983 Coalinga Earthquake (Magnitude 6.7), is capable of causing significant damage if the epicenter is near a densely populated area. Major earthquakes (Magnitude 7 to 7.9) occur in California about once every 10 years.

According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) modeling for major earthquake scenarios in the Bay Area and Southern California, violent shaking in densely populated areas could result in over 50,000 displaced households and over 30,000 individuals requiring short-term shelter.

Drought: California is accustomed to lengthy droughts, including two seven-year droughts that started in the late 1920s and 1940s. A more recent one lasted six years, from 1987 to 1992. "To get these kinds of years, we have to go back to the late 1920s and the 1930s, which were the Dust Bowl years," said California state climatologist Michael Anderson. It's not just the lack of rain and snow. Warmer temperatures, too, are exacerbating California's droughts.

Floods: California has experienced destructive flood events throughout its history. Though the last water year with major, widespread flooding was 1997 (the New Year's Day floods, when 120,000 people were evacuated and 23,000 homes and businesses flooded), there have been several recent local flood disasters, such as the Oroville Spillway in 2017, the Pajaro flood in 2023, and the Russian River floods this winter. Since 1992, every county in California has been declared a federal disaster area at least once for a flooding event. Estimates suggest more than 7.3 million people and structures valued at nearly \$600 billion statewide are located in areas with at least a 1-in-500 probability of flooding in any given year. In the Central Valley alone, nearly one in three residents and crops worth approximately \$6 billion are located in areas at risk of flooding.

Climate Change: Unfortunately, it is becoming easier to anticipate warmer-than-average conditions due to climate change. The heat contributes to a thirstier atmosphere, plants, and soils, which increases demand and reduces runoff that flows into reservoirs. Record-breaking heat waves, a vanishing Sierra snowpack, and life-threatening historic wildfires demonstrate that California's climate emergencies are growing with frequency and intensity.

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.

FIRESCOPE Program: Under the Health and Safety Code Sections (13070 – 13073), the goal of the FIRESCOPE Program is the improvement of fire incident management and the coordination of multiagency firefighting resources on major or multiple incidents. The program shall include, but is not limited to, the following areas as part of its research, development, and implementation objectives:

- (a) Improved methods to coordinate multiagency firefighting resources during major incidents.
- (b) Improved methods for forecasting fire behavior.
- (c) The capability to assess fire, weather, and terrain conditions at the scene of an incident.
- (d) Standard fire terminology for improving incident management.
- (e) Improved multiagency fire communications.
- (f) Multiagency training on FIRESCOPE components and products.
- (g) A common mapping system, including orthophoto maps.
- (h) Improved fire information management systems.
- (i) Regional operational coordination centers for regional multiagency coordination of firefighting resources.

According to Cal OES, “the FIRESCOPE vision is to continue national leadership in the development of all-hazard incident and multi-agency coordination systems, to enhance and encourage full participation by the California fire service in the statewide Fire and Rescue Mutual Aid System, and to provide a common voice for the California fire service relating to these issues.”

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.

Disaster Recovery: Given the many major fires since 2015, Cal OES has gained a vast amount of experience in facilitating massive debris removal contracts in conjunction with the federal government and the California Department of Resources, Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle). Debris removal is an elemental component of recovery for a cities and counties impacted by an earthquake, as it is the first step to allow for a community to begin to rebuild.

In late 2019, Cal OES finalized the California Disaster Recovery Framework (CDRF) and accompanying Recovery Support Function (RSF) Annexes for long-term recovery. Similar to the organization of the ESFs, the RSFs are led by a state coordinating agency, and in conjunction with the federal government, serve to coordinate recovery-specific resources and guidance to local and tribal communities impacted by disasters.

Federal guidance on recovery planning: FEMA recommends States and local jurisdictions prioritize three areas in disaster recovery planning: (1) disaster housing planning; (2) state disaster recovery coordinator; and (3) disaster financial management policies and procedures.

Disaster Housing Planning: FEMA recommends the establishment of a State-Led Disaster Housing Task Force (SLDHTF) based on lessons learned from recent disasters to develop a disaster housing plan as part of the SEP or as a standalone document and update this plan at least once every two years. FEMA suggests SLDHTFs lead and coordinate state, local, private sector, and community-based actions to assess housing impacts, identify appropriate post-disaster housing options, and establish processes for expediting post-disaster housing delivery.

SLDHTF plans should clearly identify the roles, responsibilities, composition, and mobilization procedures for the SLDHTF, and how the SLDHTF integrates into the incident command structure. To have a successful SLDHTF plan, FEMA encourages recipients to complete a state housing strategy template and establish a State Disaster Recovery Coordinator.

State Disaster Recovery Coordinator: FEMA provides a *Pre-Disaster Recovery Planning Guide* to help states prepare for recovery by developing pre-disaster recovery plans that follow a process to engage members of the whole community, develop recovery capabilities, and create an organizational framework for recovery efforts. It is strongly recommended that states establish a State Disaster Recovery Coordinator (SDRC), as an effective pre-disaster recovery plan and process is crucial to help recipients prepare for major disaster incidents, recover effectively, and enable state leadership to better organize and identify gaps in the state's recovery capabilities.

Disaster Financial Management Policies and Procedures: Lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and wildfires demonstrate the need for impacted jurisdictions to improve their ability to immediately track and account for disaster costs. Disaster financial management includes policies and procedures that work to recover expenses pertaining to damage, emergency protective measures, and debris management during and after a disaster. These policies and procedures include, but are not limited to, those supporting eligible contract costs and force account labor, materials, and equipment.

Urgency clause: This bill includes an urgency clause “In order to enhance California’s recovery planning to address the immediate threats to public health and safety caused by catastrophic wildfires, earthquakes, and floods”

Prior and 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 Emergency Management)

AB 2594 (Committee on Emergency Management, 2024) Would have required the Office of Emergency Services (OES) to prepare a gap analysis of the state’s mutual aid systems beginning January 1, 2025, and every two years thereafter (Held in the Assembly Committee Appropriations)

AB 1567 (Rodriguez, 2021) Would have required the California Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) to develop a state recovery framework and assist local governments in the development of regional recovery frameworks for California’s catastrophic plans (Held in the Assembly Committee on Appropriations).

AB 1071 (Rodriguez, 2021) Would have required the Office of Emergency Services to biennially convene key personnel and agencies that have emergency management roles and responsibilities to participate in tabletop exercises to evaluate responses to various simulated disaster situations.. (Held in the Senate Committee on Appropriations)

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on file.

Opposition

None on file.

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