

Date of Hearing: June 15, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Rhodesia Ransom, Chair

SB 1299 (Arreguín) – As Amended May 14, 2026

SENATE VOTE: 39-0

SUBJECT: State Fire Marshal Fire Suppression Education and Training Safety Act

SUMMARY: This bill establishes certification and training requirements under the Office of the State Fire Marshal (SFM) for individuals to perform work on fire suppression systems, as specified. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Establishes the SFM Fire Suppression Education and Training Safety Act to improve the performance and reliability of water- and chemical-based fire suppression systems by providing a means to certify and register any person who performs work on those systems.
- 2) Defines numerous terms for purposes of this bill including, “fire suppression system” to mean an assembly of piping or conduit and associated components, whether public or private, that conveys water or other approved fire-suppressing agents to extinguish, control, or contain fire and to provide protection from exposure to fire or other products of combustion, as specified.
- 3) Prohibits a person from engaging in work on a fire suppression system without first being certified or registered by the SFM.
- 4) Specifies that the prohibition in 3) above shall not apply to any of the following:
 - a) Installation, alteration, or repair of one and two-family residential fire sprinkler systems.
 - b) The installation, alteration, or repair of underground water supply lines, as specified.
 - c) Pre-engineered fixed extinguishing systems.
 - d) Specified fire suppression personnel, fire inspectors, or fire marshals performing specified inspections or testing.
 - e) Monthly, quarterly, and annual system-related inspections, as specified.
- 5) Notwithstanding (4), a person may perform an investigation of internal piping condition and obstructions of water-based fire suppression systems without first being certified or registered by the State Fire Marshal if the person meets both of the following criteria:
 - a) The person holds a valid certificate or license from a nationally recognized professional standards organization that requires the holder to successfully demonstrate having at least five years of experience in the inspection, testing, and maintenance of water-based fire suppression systems.

- b) The person successfully passes a written examination on California-based regulations and a practical physical examination given by the professional standards organization, as specified.
- 6) Authorizes a person to perform internal inspection and obstruction investigations of a fire suppression system if the person meets specified criteria.
- 7) Provides that a certified fire sprinkler fitter shall directly supervise apprentices and up to two trainees and requires a person who possesses a C-16 Fire Protection Contractor license from the Contractors State License Board (C-16 contractor) to be responsible for ensuring the people they assign to work on a fire suppression system are appropriately certified or registered and comply with the supervisor ratios in this bill.
- 8) Specifies that a person not registered in a state or federally approved sprinkler fitter apprenticeship program must be registered with the SFM as a trainee and work as a trainee for up to one year from the date of their registration.
- 9) Identifies the requirements an applicant must meet to be registered as an apprentice or trainee, or certified as a fire sprinkler fitter.
- 10) Requires a certified fire sprinkler fitter to complete specified continuing education (CE) requirements and gives the SFM discretion to determine further CE requirements.
- 11) Requires a state or federally approved fire sprinkler fitter apprenticeship program to consist of specified minimum time requirements.
- 12) Provides that the SFM shall evaluate and approve an applicant's out-of-state apprenticeship training using specified criteria from the Department of Industrial Relation's Division of Apprenticeship Standards (DAS).
- 13) Directs the SFM to compile trainee and apprentice registrations and fire sprinkler fitter certifications in a database and authorizes the SFM to coordinate with DAS while compiling the required data, as specified.
- 14) Establishes various enforcement provisions relating to written complaints of alleged violations; the authority to inspect project worksites; the issuance of stop work orders, notices of violations and correction orders; and, specifies disciplinary actions and penalties for violations of this bill.
- 15) Authorizes the SFM to establish and collect reasonable fees to cover the costs of implementing this bill.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the SFM, within the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) to protect life and property through the development and application of fire prevention, engineering, training and education, and enforcement. (Health and Safety Code § 13100)
- 2) Authorizes the SFM to propose, adopt, and administer regulations deemed necessary to ensure fire safety in buildings and structures in the state, including those related to construction, modification, installation, testing, inspection, labeling, certification,

registration, licensing, reporting, operation, and maintenance, and to collect reasonable fees necessary to implement any of the specified regulatory activities. (Health and Safety Code § 13110)

- 3) Establishes a certification and registration program for Automatic Fire Extinguishing Systems Sprinkler Fitters (AES Certification) in SFM regulations, including an application process, qualifications, performance standards, and continuing education requirements, to require anyone who installs, alters or repairs water-based fire protection systems possesses the necessary skills and qualifications to perform the work. (Health and Safety Code § 13195)
- 4) Any person who willfully or maliciously constructs or maintains a fire-protection system in any structure with the intent to install a fire protection system which is known to be inoperable or to impair the effective operation of a system, so as to threaten the safety of any occupant or user of the structure in the event of a fire, shall be subject to imprisonment pursuant to Penal Code § 1170 subdivision (h) for two, three, or four years. (Penal Code § 386)

FISCAL EFFECT: According to the Senate Appropriations Committee,

Unknown fiscal impact to the SFM. Staff notes that while the bill generally codifies the SFM's current regulations regarding its AES Program, it introduces an alternative pathway for persons to be eligible to work on water-based fire suppression systems and uses terminology that departs from existing regulatory standards (e.g., "chemical-based fire suppression systems" vs. "engineered and pre-engineered fixed extinguishing systems"). If the SFM must update its AES regulations, there may be additional, but potentially absorbable, rulemaking workload. Administrative workload for the SFM may be offset to some extent by fee revenue (SFM Licensing and Certification Fund).

To the extent there are prosecutions for misdemeanor violations of this bill, there will be related cost pressures to the courts (Trial Court Trust Fund) to adjudicate the criminal charges and costs to the counties to incarcerate persons who are convicted. These actual cost pressures and costs will depend on the number of prosecutions and convictions.

COMMENTS:

Author's statement: "Fire sprinkler systems are one of our most critical tools for saving lives in a fire. When properly installed and maintained, they are extraordinarily effective — but that effectiveness depends entirely on the skill and training of the workers who install, inspect, and service them. SB 1299 ensures that California has a clear, enforceable framework for certifying and training fire sprinkler fitters. Every Californian deserves to know that the fire suppression systems protecting their homes, workplaces, and communities have been installed and maintained by qualified professionals."

Equity Impact: This bill does not anticipate any equity impacts or intends to increase any existing inequities.

Fire Sprinkler Fitters: A fire sprinkler fitter is a specialized pipefitter trade within the building and construction industry focused on the design, installation, maintenance, and repair of all types of fire protection and fire suppression systems, including wet and dry pipe systems, deluge

systems, and foam systems. A fire sprinkler fitter is responsible for reading blueprints and plan layouts and installing hangers and overhead piping in all types of buildings and construction. Fire sprinklers are found in a variety of commercial, industrial, and residential buildings, including high-rises, warehouses, aircraft hangars, hotels, motels, and homes.

AES Certification Regulations: As noted by the Senate Emergency Management Committee, AB 433 (Gordon, Chapter 377, Statutes of 2013) grants the SFM the authority to adopt regulations and standards deemed necessary to ensure fire safety in all types of occupancies in California, including regulations related to certification, registration, and licensing. Due to the increasing use of fire protection systems throughout the state, changes in construction standards, and the increased complexity of fire protection systems, the SFM developed the AES certification and registration program in regulations to establish minimum statewide training standards and ensure that those who install or work on life safety fire suppression systems in California possess the necessary skills, experience, and qualifications to safely do so.¹

According to the SFM, the AES Certification regulations resulted from a workgroup consisting of representatives from industry, labor, enforcing agencies, and CAL FIRE/SFM staff and were approved by the SFM's AES Technical Advisory Committee. The SFM periodically updates AES regulations, including exam administration and fee structures, driven by direct input from industry and labor representatives on the AES Committee. The regulations took effect on July 1, 2017, and can be found in the California Code of Regulations, Title 19, Division 1, Chapter 5.5. The regulations included an implementation period and specified that by January 1, 2019, all fitters shall possess a certification card, and all trainees and apprentices shall possess a registration card. The SFM reports a total of 4,108 fitters were certified or registered in 2025.

Current Regulations: As specified in the regulations, a person must be 16 years of age or older, complete the required application, provide proof of completion of a state or federally approved apprenticeship program or proof of a valid C-16 contractor license, and pass a written exam to be certified as a fire sprinkler fitter. To register as an apprentice, a person must be 16 years of age or older, complete the required application, provide proof of acceptance into a state or federally approved apprenticeship program, and provide proof of employment with a licensed C-16 contractor. To register as a trainee, a person must be 16 years of age or older, complete the required application, and provide proof of employment with a licensed C-16 contractor.

Fire Guard Corporation, et al. v. California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection: In 2019, a coalition of plaintiffs in the Fire Guard Corp., et al. v. CAL FIRE, challenged AES certification regulations, citing violations under the rulemaking procedures of the Administrative Procedure Act (APA), which is designed to allow the public to participate in the adoption of state regulations. In December 2025, the Sacramento Superior Court issued its judgment and injunction, finding that the regulatory provisions related to the registration and supervision of fire sprinkler fitter trainees violated the appropriate public comment periods established in the APA and therefore deemed those provisions invalid. The judgement and injunction became effective on January 7, 2026.

The court ruling invalidated specific training and supervision mandates within the AES certification program, rendering several key provisions unenforceable. Specifically, new hires

¹ Laws and Regulations For Automatic Extinguishing Systems, [Automatic Fire Extinguishing Systems Laws And Regulations \(PDF\)](#)

are no longer legally required to enroll in a state or federally approved apprenticeship program within one year of their hire date. Additionally, the court struck down the strict supervision ratios that restricted a certified fire sprinkler fitter to managing only apprentices and a maximum of two trainees.

Despite striking these specific rules, the court acknowledged the AES certification program's necessity for protecting public safety. Furthermore, the ruling explicitly preserves the authority of the SFM to introduce new regulations. This means the SFM is fully permitted to launch future rulemaking proceedings to establish updated apprenticeship or experience-related requirements for training fire sprinkler fitters.

In a January 2026 Information Bulletin from the SFM describing the judgement and injunction, the SFM states that it is actively working on a rulemaking package to address the invalidated provisions and is currently in the final stages of developing the fiscal impacts, a key component before moving forward.² The SFM states once that stage is completed, the office will submit the package to the Office of Administrative Law within the next few months.

Codifying Existing Regulations: This bill codifies current regulations, as well as the provisions invalidated by the court, into statute governing fire suppression systems. The author states that, as a result of the court ruling, current California law lacks clear, enforceable experience and apprenticeship standards for fire sprinkler fitter trainees. According to the author, the regulatory gap undermines workforce quality. This bill seeks to address that gap by restoring enforceable experience standards, requiring direct supervision of trainees, mandating completion of approved apprenticeship programs, and providing robust enforcement tools to ensure that only properly trained and certified professionals perform this highly technical fire suppression work to reduce the risk of system failure.

Arguments in Support: The bill co-sponsors, Sprinkler Fitters Association of California and , write in support that “SB 1299 closes a critical regulatory gap that currently undermines workforce standards and public safety in California's fire protection industry. Fire suppression systems are among the most important life-safety features in residential, commercial, and industrial buildings. Their effectiveness depends entirely on proper installation, inspection, testing, and maintenance by individuals who possess the training, experience, and technical expertise required to perform this highly specialized work.... Without clear statutory standards, unqualified or insufficiently trained individuals may perform highly technical fire suppression work, increasing the risk of system failure, property loss, and tragic consequences during an emergency. SB 1299 reaffirms California’s commitment to public safety by ensuring that only properly trained and certified professionals perform this critical life-safety work.”

Committee Amendments: The author’s office, in consultation with Committee staff, has decided to take committee amendments to strike “water- and chemical-based systems”, as the definition of “fire suppression system” in Section 13191.2(i) encompasses both water- and chemical-based systems. These amendments streamline the statute and ensure internal consistency to reflect the intentions of the bill. The amendments also include nonsubstantive clarifying changes. Amendments are below:

Amendment 1

² Sprinkler Fitter Licensing – Judgment and Injunction, <https://share.google/423VKhXkhE56a6rjv>

On page 3, in line 9, strike out “water- and chemical-based”

Amendment 2

On page 3, in line 19, strike out “water-based or chemical-based”

Amendment 3

On page 3, in line 35, after “certified” insert:

fire

Amendment 4

On page 5, in line 37, strike out “water- or chemical-based”

Amendment 5

On page 9, in line 37, after “certified” insert:

fire

Double Referral: This bill was also referred to the Assembly Labor and Employment Committee.

Related Legislation: AB 433 (Gordon, Chapter 377, Statutes of 2013). This bill granted the SFM the authority to adopt regulations and standards deemed necessary to ensure fire safety in all types of occupancies in California, including regulations related to certification, registration, and licensing.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

California State Pipe Trades Council
Sprinklers Fitters Association

Opposition

None on file.

Analysis Prepared by: Ugbad Farah / E.M. / (916) 319-3802