

Date of Hearing: June 30, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Rhodesia Ransom, Chair

SB 345 (Hurtado) – As Introduced February 12, 2025

**SENATE VOTE:** 38-0

**SUBJECT:** California Fire Service Training and Education Program: California Fire and Arson Training Act: fees

**SUMMARY:** Allows the State Fire Marshal (SFM) to collect admission fees for seminars, conferences, and specialized trainings associated with the California Fire Services Training and Education Program and the California Fire and Arson Training Act, as specified. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Authorizes the SFM to establish and collect specified admission fees only to the extent that state appropriations and other funding sources for those seminars, conferences, and specialized training are insufficient to cover the necessary costs associated with CFSTEP.
- 2) Authorizes the SFM to establish fees only to the extent that state appropriations and other funding sources for the purposes of implementing the Act are insufficient to cover the necessary costs of the activities eligible to be paid from those fees.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Establishes CFSTEP, within the office of the SFM, and requires the SFM – with policy guidance and advice from the State Board of Fire Services (SBFS) – to carry out the management of the program, as specified.
- 2) Authorizes the SFM to, among other things, establish and collect admission fees and other fees that may be necessary to be charged for seminars, conferences, and specialized training given, as specified.
- 3) Authorizes the SFM to establish and collect fees to implement the Act, which requires the SFM to, among other things, establish and make recommendations related to minimum standards for fire protection personnel and fire personnel instructors, develop course curricula for arson, fire technology, and apprenticeship training, and promote the California Fire Academy System, as specified.

**FISCAL EFFECT:** According to the Senate Committee on Appropriations, “Unknown fiscal impact to the SFM (California Fire and Arson Training Fund). This bill limits the SFM’s ability to collect training fees to the amount that is not covered by state appropriations or other funding sources. The California State Fire Training Division (SFT) within the SFM does not generally receive state budget appropriations, as the program is currently fully funded through user fees. If state or other funding is allocated to the SFT, then the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) anticipates decreased costs for trainings and certifications to some extent. This may result in an increase in overall course participation and subsequent increased administrative workload for SFT. Since the amount of interest generated by reduced course costs to applicants cannot be known at this time since no additional funding has been allocated to the

program, CAL FIRE assumes this workload increase would be absorbable. However, to the extent that any subsequent workload increase is significant, then there may be additional cost pressures to SFT if appropriated funding and user fees are insufficient to cover its administrative costs.”

#### COMMENTS:

Purpose of the bill: According to the author, “in order to combat future California wildfires, our first responders should have every resource possible to help save lives and safeguard communities. A fully staffed and well trained firefighting force is essential to successfully combating fires in the state. However, rising training fees can deter individuals from choosing a career in the fire service. SB 345 aims to address rising training costs by permitting the State Fire Marshal to accept additional funding sources for the California Fire Service Training and Education Program. Permitting the State Fire Marshall to receive additional funding sources for training programs will help to mitigate rising fees for those seeking fire training certification. California cannot afford to let high training costs stand in the way of public safety.”

Equity impact: According to the author’s office, “When the State Fire Training (SFT) program was established in California, it relied on user fees to recover the cost of staff, course development and certification. Over the years the fire service has become more professional and certifications are now required for every position in the fire service. To generate enough revenue, fees needed to be raised by over 200% and in some cases 400%. This sharp rise in costs has resulted in courses and certification becoming unaffordable to volunteer firefighters and individuals seeking entry level positions. SB 345 allows the State Fire Marshal to accept additional funding sources for the California Fire Service Training and Education Program. The bill would make the same change relative to the California Fire and Arson Training Act. Senate Bill 345 aims to address the escalating costs of fire training programs, and ensure that individuals who were priced out of the fire service are afforded equitable opportunities. By mitigating the financial burden associated with fire training and certification, this bill seeks to foster accessibility to this field regardless of an individual’s financial situation.”

Background: This bill would authorize SFM to establish and collect the admission fees and other fees associated with the CFSTEP, and to establish the fees to implement the California Fire and Arson Training Act, only to the extent that state appropriations and other funding sources are insufficient to cover the necessary costs of the activities eligible to be paid from those fees.

California State Fire Training (SFT): The SFT is a division within the Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM), which establishes, develops, and delivers standardized training and education for the California fire service. The SFT annually develops a curriculum development plan for courses to be updated or added to the CFSTES and CFSTEP. SFT curriculum is designed using the State Fire Training Curriculum Development Model. SFT is responsible for establishing the rules and regulations, course development, course delivery, and testing for over 75 courses and certificates. These courses are critical to training firefighters to provide state-of-the-art protection to everyone in need in the state. The program includes pre-servicing training through 60 accredited community colleges, accredited fire academies, and private vendors. Over 10,000 paid and volunteer firefighters participate in these programs every year. These training programs are expanding to meet the reality of California, where wildfires, floods, and other disasters occur year-round.

Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM): OSFM's mission is to protect life and property by developing and applying fire prevention engineering, education, and enforcement. The principal functions of OSFM are to foster, promote and develop ways and means of protecting life and property against fire and panic. OSFM achieves these functions through several major program elements, including engineering, education, enforcement, and the State Board of Fire Services (Board) support. The Board provides a forum for addressing fire protection and prevention issues of statewide concern; develops technical and performance standards for training of fire service personnel; accredits curriculum; establishes policy for the certification system for the California Fire Service; advises the SFM on the dissemination of regulations; and sits as an appeals board on the application of California State Fire Marshal regulations.

OSFM provides support through various fire safety responsibilities and building regulations (controlling substances, regulating hazardous liquid pipelines, reviewing regulations and building standards, and providing training and education). OSFM operates several different divisions (CFSTES, CFSTEP, California Fire Service Census, and California Fire Academy) that deal with statewide activities, such as code enforcement in state-owned buildings, setting standards for testing and listing of fire protection materials and equipment, arson and bomb investigation, and pipeline safety.

To successfully receive a California OSFM certification or to register as an Instructor or lead/skills evaluator position, the Fire Chief or authorized signatory signing the certification task book or experience letter must be listed in the SFT Authorized Chief database before the certification task book or experience letter can be approved.

Arguments in support: The California Fire Chiefs Association (CalChiefs) and the Fire Districts Association of California (FDAC) write, "to express their support for Senate Bill 345, which improves access to firefighter training by allowing the State Fire Marshal to accept additional funding sources for the California Fire Service Training and Education Program. SB 345 directly addresses this issue by expanding funding options, ensuring that firefighters, fire departments, and students have access to affordable, high-quality training. With California facing increasingly complex fire conditions, now is the time to invest in the next generation of firefighters by making training both accessible and sustainable."

The City of Tulare writes, "California State Fire Training (SFT) provides curriculum and certification to current fire department firefighters, and individuals seeking a career in the fire service. Over the years the fire service has become more professional, and certifications are now required for every position in the fire service. To generate enough revenue, fees needed to be raised by over 200% and in some cases as high as 400%. This has resulted in courses and certification becoming unaffordable to volunteer firefighters and for individuals seeking entry level positions. SB 345 allows the State Fire Marshal to accept additional funding sources for the California Fire Service Training and Education Program. The bill would make the same change relative to the California Fire and Arson Training Act. Due to the enormous risk of fire and other disasters that face California, we must make State Fire Training an affordable solution for our paid and volunteer firefighters, as well as students wishing to enter the fire service. For these reasons, the City of Tulare supports SB 345 (Hurtado) and respectfully asks for your AYE vote."

Related legislation: SB 662 (Alvarado-Gil, 2025) extends, from January 1, 2026, to January 1, 2031, the repeal date on the statutory requirement that CAL FIRE establish a statewide program to allow qualifying entities to support and augment CAL FIRE in its defensible space and home hardening assessment and education efforts, as specified. (SB 662 was held in Senate Committee on Appropriations.)

AB 1457 (Bryan, 2025) requires CAL FIRE to include training consistent with the “Home Ignition Zone/Defensible Space Inspector” course plan, established by the SFM, to ensure that individuals are trained to conduct home ignition zone inspections, as specified. (AB 1457 is pending in the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Water.)

Prior legislation: SB 577 (Hurtado, 2023) would have limited the SFM’s ability to establish and collect admission fees and other fees associated with FSTEP and the Act only to the extent that state appropriations and other funding sources are insufficient to cover the necessary costs associated with those programs and activities, as specified. (Gutted and Amended into an Unrelated Issue)

AB 662 (Rodriguez, Chapter 575, Statutes of 2022) among other things, required the SFM to establish additional training standards that include the criteria for curriculum content recommended by the Statewide Training and Education Advisory Committee involving peer-to-peer suicide prevention programming, as specified, and required the SFM to coordinate with Cal-JAC to develop and deliver curriculum, as specified.

## **REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

### **Support**

Berkeley Fire Department  
California Fire Chiefs Association  
California Special Districts Association  
City of Oxnard Fire Department  
City of Tulare  
El Dorado County Emergency Services Authority  
Fire Districts Association of California  
Fremont Fire Department  
Georgetown Fire Protection District  
Lake County Fire Protection District  
North County Fire Authority  
North County Fire Protection District  
Orange County Fire Authority  
Penn Valley Fire Protection District  
Rancho Adobe Fire Protection District  
Sacramento County Airport Fire  
Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District  
San Jose Fire Department  
Sanger Fire Department  
Scotts Valley Fire Protection District  
Sonoma County Fire Chiefs Association  
Sonoma County Fire District

Sonoma Valley Fire District  
Southern Marin Fire Protection District  
Woodbridge Rural County Fire Protection District

**Opposition**

None on file.

**Analysis Prepared by:** Mike Dayton / E.M. / (916) 319-3802