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SB-833 Emergencies: Office of Emergency Services: guidelines: alert and warning systems. (2017-2018)

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Senate Bill No. 833

CHAPTER 617

An act to add Section 8593.7 to the Government Code, relating to emergencies.

[Approved by Governor September 21, 2018. Filed with Secretary of State September 21, 2018.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 833, McGuire. Emergencies: Office of Emergency Services: guidelines: alert and warning systems.

The California Emergency Services Act 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. The act also provides for systems for the public dissemination of alerts regarding missing children, attacks upon law enforcement officers, and missing persons who are 65 years of age or older, among others, and requires the Department of the California Highway Patrol to activate these systems and issue alerts upon the request of a law enforcement agency if certain conditions are met.

This bill, on or before July 1, 2019, would require OES, in consultation with specified entities, to develop voluntary guidelines for alerting and warning the public of an emergency. The bill would require OES to provide each city, county, and city and county with a copy of the guidelines.

This bill would authorize OES to impose conditions upon application for voluntary grant funding that it administers requiring operation of alert and warning activities consistent with the guidelines. The bill would also require OES, within 6 months of making the statewide guidelines available and at least annually thereafter and through its California Specialized Training Institute, to develop an alert and warning training, as specified.

This bill would authorize OES to adopt emergency regulations for these purposes, as specified.

Vote: majority Appropriation: no Fiscal Committee: yes Local Program: no

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares as follows:

(a) The size and scope of wildland fires in California have grown significantly over the past decade. These disasters have put the lives of millions at risk and the need to alert residents of danger from these unprecedented disasters has never been greater.

(b) The northern California firestorm of 2017 is the most destructive and deadly wildland fire disaster in American history.

(c) The death toll from blazes in northern California remains at 44 people, including 24 people in the County of Sonoma, 9 people in the County of Mendocino, 7 people in the County of Napa, and 4 people in the County of Yuba.

- (d) Nearly 245,000 acres were burned in the northern California fires.
- (e) The southern California wildfires of December 2017, including the Thomas Fire, burned over 307,000 acres.
- (f) The Thomas Fire is the largest wildland fire in California's modern history, which burned 281,893 acres.
- (g) The January 2018 mudslides in the County of Santa Barbara caused by the Thomas Fire killed at least 21 people.
- (h) While opt-in emergency alert systems are critical to the preservation of human life, it has become clear that multiple communication mediums and not just opt-in systems may be necessary to protect lives and save property.
- (i) The federal Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) system is a component of the federal Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) that allows customers who own certain wireless telephones and other enabled mobile devices to receive geographically targeted, text-like messages alerting them of imminent threats to safety in their area. The WEA system was established in 2008 pursuant to the federal Warning, Alert, and Response Network (WARN) Act and became operational in 2012. Since then, over 33,000 WEA alerts have been issued.
- (j) Authorized national, state, or local government authorities may send alerts regarding public safety emergencies—such as evacuation orders or shelter-in-place orders due to severe weather, a terrorist threat, chemical spill, or other hazards—using the WEA system.
- (k) The alerts from authenticated public safety officials are sent through the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA's) IPAWS system to participating wireless carriers, which then push the alerts to mobile devices in the affected area.
- (l) The Emergency Alert System (EAS) is a national public warning system that requires broadcasters, cable television systems, wireless cable systems, satellite digital audio radio service providers, and direct broadcast satellite providers to provide the communications capability to the President of the United States to address the American public during a national emergency. When in conformance with federal rules and regulations, the system also may be used by state and local authorities to deliver important emergency information targeted to specific areas.
- (m) It is the intent of the Legislature that, in the event of another catastrophe like the 2017 firestorms, every tool be used to alert and warn all members of the public in the affected area.
- (n) The Legislature finds and declares that the safety of local communities requires designated alerting authorities to ensure they have multiple operators, adequate testing and training, and functional equipment and software. It is therefore the intent of the Legislature that, to the extent designated alerting authorities have difficulty acquiring or maintaining adequate alert and warning resources, those designated alerting authorities may consult with the Office of Emergency Services on best practices to achieve those goals.

SEC. 2. Section 8593.7 is added to the Government Code, to read:

8593.7. (a) On or before July 1, 2019, the Office of Emergency Services, in consultation with, at minimum, telecommunications carriers, the California cable and broadband industry, radio and television broadcasters, the California State Association of Counties, the League of California Cities, the disability community, appropriate federal agencies, and the Standardized Emergency Management System Alert and Warning Specialist Committee, shall develop guidelines for alerting and warning the public of an emergency. Those guidelines shall include, at minimum, the following:

- (1) Timelines for sending alerts during an emergency.
- (2) Practices for sending advance warnings of an impending threat.
- (3) Practices for testing, training on, and exercising a city's, county's, or city and county's alert and warning system.
- (4) Consideration for coordinating alerts with neighboring jurisdictions.
- (5) Guidelines and protocols for redundancy and utilizing multiple forms of alerts.
- (6) Guidelines and protocols for chain of command communications and accounting for staffing patterns to ensure a trained operator is always on call.
- (7) Practices for effective notifications to the access and functional needs population as defined in subdivision (b) of Section 8593.3.
- (8) Message templates.
- (9) Common terminology.

(b) (1) The Office of Emergency Services shall provide each city, county, and city and county with a copy of the guidelines developed according to subdivision (a).

(2) Six months after the Office of Emergency Services provides the guidelines to each city, county, and city and county, the office may impose conditions upon a city's, county's, or city and county's application for any voluntary grant funds that have a nexus to emergency management performance that the office administers, requiring that city, county, or city and county to operate its alert and warning activities in a manner that is consistent with the guidelines developed pursuant to subdivision (a).

(c) Within six months of making the guidelines available pursuant to subdivision (b) and at least annually, the Office of Emergency Services, through its California Specialized Training Institute, shall develop an alert and warning training. The training shall include, at minimum, information regarding the evaluation, purchase, and operation of Wireless Emergency Alert system (WEA) and the Emergency Alert System (EAS) equipment and software, including capabilities that address communications for the access and functional needs community; the technical capabilities of the WEA and EAS function within an alert system, pursuant to current Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Federal Communications Commission regulations, as amended from time to time; and the alert and warning guidelines developed in subdivision (a).

(d) The safety of local communities requires designated alerting authorities to ensure that they have multiple operators, adequate testing and training, and functional equipment and software. To the extent designated alerting authorities have difficulty acquiring or maintaining adequate alert and warning resources, they may consult with the Office of Emergency Services on best practices to achieve those goals.

(e) "Operator" means those personnel required by the designated alerting authority to transmit alert and warning messages.

(f) The Office of Emergency Services (OES) may adopt emergency regulations to implement this section. The adoption, amendment, repeal, or readoption of a regulation authorized by this section is deemed to address an emergency, for purposes of Sections 11346.1 and 11349.6 of the Government Code, and the office is hereby exempted for this purpose from the requirements of subdivision (b) of Section 11346.1 of the Government Code.