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|------|------------------|----------------|--------------|-----------------|------------------|--------------|
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AB-252 Wildfire protection: Department of Forestry and Fire Protection: staffing. (2025-2026)

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AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MARCH 24, 2025

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE— 2025–2026 REGULAR SESSION

ASSEMBLY BILL

NO. 252

Introduced by Assembly Member Bains
(Coauthor: [Assembly Member Ransom](#))

January 15, 2025

An act [to add Article 5.5 \(commencing with Section 4159\) to Chapter 1 of Part 2 of Division 4 of the Public Resources Code](#), relating to fire protection.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 252, as amended, Bains. Wildfire protection: Department of Forestry and Fire Protection: staffing.

Existing law establishes the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection in the Natural Resources Agency. Existing law requires the department to be responsible for specified activities, including maintaining an integrated staff to accomplish fire protection, fire prevention, pest control, and forest and range protection and enhancement activities, as needed.

This bill would require the department to reach full staffing levels, as defined, on or before January 1, 2028, and to maintain full staffing levels throughout the calendar year at all fire stations and facilities under its jurisdiction. The bill would require the department to implement staffing requirements on a schedule, as specified. The bill would require the department to report annually to the Legislature on, among other things, progress toward implementation of year-round staffing requirements. The bill would require the Legislature to appropriate in the annual Budget Act or another statute sufficient moneys to implement these provisions.

~~Existing law establishes in the Natural Resource Agency the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, and requires the department to be responsible for, among other things, fire protection and prevention, as provided.~~

~~This bill would provide that it is the intent of the Legislature to enact subsequent legislation relating to increasing year-round staffing levels at the department.~~

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

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

SECTION 1. Article 5.5 (commencing with Section 4159) is added to Chapter 1 of Part 2 of Division 4 of the Public Resources Code, to read:

Article 5.5. CAL-FIRE Staffing

4159. This article shall be known and may be cited as the Stop Laying Off Firefighters Act.

4160. The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) Climate change has fundamentally altered California's fire patterns, eliminating traditional fire seasons in favor of year-round fire risk.

(b) The department currently operates with reduced staffing during winter months.

(c) Maintaining adequate firefighting capability throughout the year is essential for public safety and effective fire prevention.

(d) Year-round staffing will improve emergency response times and enable more comprehensive fire prevention activities.

4161. (a) For the purposes of this article, "full staffing levels" means the combined highest number of full-time, part-time, and seasonal firefighting personnel employed by the department in any single month between January 1, 2022, and December 31, 2024.

(b) (1) On or before January 1, 2028, the department shall maintain no less than full staffing levels throughout the calendar year at all fire stations and facilities under its jurisdiction.

(2) The department shall employ sufficient permanent firefighting personnel to meet the requirements of paragraph (1).

(c) The department shall implement the staffing requirements pursuant to subdivision (b) in accordance with the following schedule:

(1) On or before January 1, 2026, the department shall achieve 50 percent of the required increase in year-round staffing levels.

(2) On or before January 1, 2027, the department shall achieve 75 percent of the required increase in year-round staffing levels.

(d) (1) The department shall report annually to the Legislature on all of the following:

(A) Progress toward implementation of year-round staffing requirements described in this section.

(B) Impact on emergency response capabilities.

(C) Cost analysis and budgetary requirements.

(D) Recruitment and retention metrics.

(2) A report submitted pursuant to paragraph (1) shall be submitted in compliance with Section 9795 of the Government Code.

4162. The Legislature shall appropriate in the annual Budget Act or another statute sufficient moneys to implement this article.

~~SECTION 1. It is the intent of the Legislature to enact subsequent legislation relating to increasing year-round staffing levels at the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.~~