



A Tradition of Stewardship
A Commitment to Service

Agenda Date: 3/19/2018

Agenda Placement: 7G

Napa County Legislative Subcommittee Board Agenda Letter

TO: Napa County Legislative Subcommittee
FROM: Molly Rattigan - Deputy County Executive Officer
County Executive Office
REPORT BY: Molly Rattigan, Deputy County Executive Officer - 253-4112
SUBJECT: SB 833 (McGuire) - Emergency Alert

RECOMMENDATION

County Executive Officer seeks discussion and possible action on SB 833 (McGuire), a bill that would amend the California Emergency Act to provide for a red alert system designed to issue and coordinate alerts following an evacuation order.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2017, there were historically large wildfires in Southern and Northern California. There is currently no statewide standard for how emergency alerts should go out, leading to inconsistency on how residents are notified for mass evacuation procedures.

SB 833 (McGuire) will create statewide protocols that will make sure all tools available are used during future mass evacuations. It will require a red alert system designed to issue and coordinate alerts following an evacuation order. The bill will also require the system to incorporate a variety of notification resources and developing technologies that may be tailored to the circumstances and geography of the underlying evacuation.

FISCAL IMPACT

Is there a Fiscal Impact? No

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION: The proposed action is not a project as defined by 14 California Code of Regulations 15378 (State CEQA Guidelines) and therefore CEQA is not applicable.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

The firestorm that ravaged Sonoma, Napa, Lake and Mendocino counties destroyed over 6,000 homes, scorched more than 170,000 acres, causing billions in damage and resulting in the death of 44 residents. The Southern California wildfires of December 2017 burned over 307,000 acres, including the Thomas Fire, which is the largest wildland fire in California's modern history, burning 281,893 acres.

There are several different emergency warning systems available to counties that alert residents through cell phone calls, text messages, and landline recordings. Some systems require residents to "opt-in" to the alert notifications, and others have limitations on how they can be targeted in specific areas.

The federal Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) system is a public safety system 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 21,000 WEA alerts have been issued.

The challenge in California, is that there are at least 58 different sets of procedures for how emergency evacuation alerts go out across the state. There is no statewide standard.

SB 833 will create a needed statewide standard that will require every county in California to adopt the up-to-date WEA system, or equivalent state-sanctioned system, with trained operators who can implement an evacuation order using the alert system. The legislation will also set out standards for when counties should use the system, mandate that alerts have to be sent out via landline telephones, mobile phone devices and other mediums, as well as also set out guidelines and protocols for when and how the alerts should be sent. While it may be impossible to stop the ferocious flames, the statewide protocols for emergency alerts created by SB 833 will ensure the state has a consistent notification system.

California State Association of Counties: Pending
Rural County Representatives of California: Support

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

- A . SB 833 Fact Sheet
- B . SB 833 Text

Recommendation: Approve
Reviewed By: Molly Rattigan