



SB 969 – Garage Door Back up Batteries

Summary

This bill would require the manufacturer of an automatic garage door opener sold in the state on or after January 1, 2019 to include a backup battery. It would also prohibit any person, corporation or entity from installing a residential garage door opener without a backup battery on or after this date.

Background

The 2017 Northern California wildfires left a path of destruction and loss that Californians have never seen before; an October statewide fire summary by CALFIRE estimated 8900 structures were destroyed, thousands were rushed to evacuate and forty-three lives were lost.

On October 8th, 2017, residents of Napa, Sonoma, Yuba, Butte, Lake, Mendocino, Nevada, and Orange counties faced severe winds coupled with power outages that complicated already difficult, middle of the night evacuations.

It is estimated that at least five residents lost their lives in the Northern California wildfires because they could not get out of their garages during the power outage.¹

In 1993, after garage door openers were linked to the injuries and deaths of children, the California Legislature enacted HSC 19890 to require automatic garage doors sold in this state to be manufactured with

¹ The Press Democrat, J.D. Morris, Northern California fire survivors and victims couldn't get past garage doors, December 2, 2017

sensors to prevent entrapment. Expanding the current law to ensure that garage door openers are equipped with backup batteries is the next step in ensuring that this home appliance is safe.

As utility lines fell and residents were left without electricity, numerous Northern California residents found themselves struggling to get out of their garages during evacuations. Media reports have recounted stories of neighbors stopping to help raise garage doors; elderly neighbors who didn't have the strength to manually lift their garage door; and a mother who struggled to get her disabled adult son into a family car because their custom van was in a garage that she could not open.

Additionally, as strong winds accelerate the spread of wildfires, utilities oftentimes preemptively shut off the power to thousands of residents to prevent a falling line from igniting new fires. Cutting power increases the risk of residents being blocked by their garage doors, which do not operate during an outage. While backup batteries are offered to residents during garage door installation, the additional cost of the batteries have discouraged widespread use.

Existing Law

Following tragic accidents in the 1990s, existing law requires garage door openers manufactured for sale, purchased, sold, or installed in a residence to comply with safety requirements that include an automatic reverse safety device.



This Bill

To ensure that California residents can safely and expeditiously evacuate their residence during a planned or unplanned evacuation, this bill would require the manufacturer of an automatic garage door opener sold in the state on or after January 1, 2019 to include a backup battery. This bill also prohibits any person, corporation or entity from installing a residential automatic garage door opener without a backup battery on or after this date.

Support

Consumer Federation of CA (sponsor)

Contact

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