

Date of Hearing: June 10, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON UTILITIES AND ENERGY

Cottie Petrie-Norris, Chair

SB 742 (Pérez) – As Amended January 15, 2026

**SENATE VOTE:** 39-0

**SUBJECT:** Electricity: electrical infrastructure: permanently abandoned transmission facilities: emergency response: liaisons

**SUMMARY:** Makes several changes to existing law governing electrical infrastructure safety, wildfire mitigation, and emergency response coordination, with a particular focus on requiring the removal of permanently abandoned transmission facilities and ensuring such facilities are subject to safety and wildfire mitigation requirements until removed. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), by January 1, 2028, to update General Order No. 95 to mandate that electrical corporations remove all permanently abandoned transmission facilities to prevent public nuisances or hazards to life or property, while ensuring all applicable safety and wildfire mitigation requirements apply to such facilities until removed.
- 2) Defines “permanently abandoned transmission facility” as a transmission facility that is out of service and for which the owner cannot demonstrate, with appropriate documentation, an intent to return the facility to service within a timeframe determined by the CPUC.
- 3) Requires wildfire mitigation plans to include an accounting of all transmission facilities – those in service, out of service, and permanently abandoned – along with a removal plan and interim wildfire mitigation measures for permanently abandoned facilities.
- 4) Requires electrical corporations and local publicly owned electric utilities whose service areas overlap with a local emergency operations center to establish coordination procedures with emergency response agencies and assign a trained liaison representative to each such center.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Establishes the CPUC with regulatory authority over public utilities, including electrical corporations. (Article XII of the California Constitution)
- 2) Establishes the Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety (Energy Safety) within the Natural Resources Agency which, as of July 1, 2021, subsumed the Wildfire Safety Division (WSD) responsibilities at the CPUC, including to review the Wildfire Mitigation Plans (WMPs) of electrical corporations and the power to compel information and conduct investigations. (Government Code §§ 15740 *et seq.*, Public Utilities Code §§ 326 and 8385)
- 3) Establishes the Office of Emergency Services (OES) within the office of the Governor and under the supervision of the Director of Emergency Services, with the responsibility

for the state's emergency and disaster response services for natural, technological, or man-made disasters and emergencies, including responsibility for activities necessary to prevent, respond to, recover from, and mitigate the effects of emergencies and disasters to people and property. (Government Code § 8585)

- 4) Requires OES to establish a standardized emergency management system for use by all emergency response agencies and requires all state agencies to use the standardized emergency management system to coordinate multiple-jurisdiction or multiple-agency emergency and disaster operations. Requires the standardized emergency management system to include specified systems as a framework for responding to and managing emergencies and disasters involving multiple jurisdictions or agencies, including the Incident Command Systems, mutual aid agreement, and operational area concept. (Government Code § 8607)
- 5) Requires every public utility to furnish and maintain adequate, efficient, just, and reasonable service, instrumentalities, equipment, and facilities, as are necessary to promote the safety, health, comfort, and convenience of its patrons, employees, and the public. (Public Utilities Code § 451)
- 6) Establishes the policy of the state that each electrical corporation is required to continue to operate its electric distribution grid in its service territory and to do so in a safe, reliable, efficient, and cost-effective manner. (Public Utilities Code § 399.2(a))
- 7) Authorizes the CPUC to supervise and regulate every public utility in the state and to do all things necessary and convenient in the exercise of such power and jurisdiction. (Public Utilities Code § 701)
- 8) Requires the CPUC to establish standards for the electrical corporations' disaster and emergency preparedness plans and requires electrical corporations to develop, adopt, and update an emergency and disaster preparedness plan in compliance with the standards established by the CPUC. Requires electrical corporations to invite representatives of every city, county, or city and county within their service area to meet with, and provide consultation to, the electrical corporation. (Public Utilities Code § 768.6)
- 9) Requires each electrical corporation to construct, maintain, and operate its electrical lines and equipment in a manner that will minimize the risk of catastrophic wildfire posed by those electrical lines and equipment, considering both the time required to implement the proposed mitigation, and the amount of risk reduced for the costs and risk remaining. (Public Utilities Code § 8386(a))
- 10) Requires each electrical corporation to submit a WMP to Energy Safety for review at least once every four years. Requires Energy Safety to establish a schedule for the submission of subsequent comprehensive WMPs for review and approval. Requires each electrical corporation, beginning January 1, 2027, to submit a preliminary WMP to Energy Safety at least one year before the filing of its general rate case (GRC) application or concurrent with the filing of its Risk Assessment Mitigation Phase application with the CPUC. Requires the WMP to cover the same period as the GRC period. (Public Utilities Code § 8386(b)(c))

- 11) Requires a WMP of an electrical corporation to include a description of how the plan accounts for the wildfire risk identified in the electrical corporation's Risk Assessment Mitigation Phase filing. (Public Utilities Code § 8386(d)(13))
- 12) Requires a WMP of an electrical corporation to also include a description of the actions the electrical corporation will take to ensure its system will achieve the highest level of safety, reliability, and resiliency, taking into account the cost and time required to achieve those benefits, and to ensure that its system is prepared for a major event, including hardening and modernizing its infrastructure with improved engineering, system design, standards, equipment, and facilities. Requires the electrical corporation to present the cost-efficiency measures adopted by the CPUC, calculated consistently with the direction provided by the CPUC's most recent risk-based decision-making framework proceeding, for at least two reasonable mitigation alternatives for a given identified wildfire risk. (Public Utilities Code § 8386(d)(14))

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown. This bill is keyed fiscal, and will be referred to the Assembly Committee on Appropriations for its review. According to the Senate Committee on Appropriations, this bill would result in a fiscal impact of: (1) ongoing annual costs of \$200,000 to \$400,000 (ratepayer funds) to Energy Safety in order to modify WMP guidelines and review WMPs consistent with the requirements of the bill; (2) ongoing annual costs of \$200,000 to \$400,000 (ratepayer funds) to the CPUC in order to address additional workload related to safety certifications and WMP review; and (3) to the extent that utilities incur significant costs to implement the changes required by this bill, there could be costs to the state as a ratepayer as the state is an electrical customer, purchasing around 1% of the state's electricity.

## **BACKGROUND:**

*Wildfire Mitigation Plans* – Wildfire Mitigation Plans (WMPs) were initiated by the enactment of SB 1028 (Hill, Chapter 598, Statutes of 2016). These original WMPs included, among other provisions, a description of preventative strategies and programs that can minimize risk of catastrophic wildfires. They were approved by the CPUC in June 2019 through the rulemaking process. Later in 2019, the Legislature revised the scope of the WMP to cover at least a three-year period<sup>1</sup> and divided oversight of the plans between Energy Safety and the CPUC.<sup>2</sup> Energy Safety is tasked with assessing safety; they evaluate if proposed actions in the WMP achieve the maximum feasible wildfire risk reduction.<sup>3</sup> The CPUC is then tasked with reviewing cost; they evaluate if the cost of implementing each mitigation effort in the WMP is just and reasonable for purposes of cost recovery. The CPUC also has enforcement authority with regard to an IOU's progress and performance of their WMPs.

*California wildfire and electric utility infrastructure* – In recent years, California has experienced several catastrophic wildfires, including many ignited by electrical utility infrastructure. Electrical infrastructure, including downed power lines, arcing, and conductor contact with trees and grass, can act as an ignition source. Risks for wildfires also increased with

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<sup>1</sup> AB 1054 (Holden, Chapter 79, Statutes of 2019).

<sup>2</sup> AB 111 (Committee on Budget, Chapter 81, Statutes of 2019).

<sup>3</sup> "Maximum feasible" means capable of being accomplished in a successful manner within a reasonable period of time, taking into account economic, environmental, legal, social, and technological factors. Public Utilities Code § 326.

the extended drought and bark beetle infestation that has increased tree mortalities and, as a result, increased the fuel and risk for wildfires.

*Risks and Rules Regarding Permanently Abandoned Utility Lines* – The risk posed by abandoned electrical utility lines includes injury, such as electrocution, and wildfire, among others. The CPUC, in its oversight of public utilities, including electrical corporations, adopts and updates general orders which cover regulatory requirements such as the reporting of incidents, the safety requirements of utility infrastructure, and others. General orders are often updated, though not on a specific schedule or cadence. The CPUC is able to enforce the requirements of the general orders on the public utilities it regulates. General Order 95 dictates uniform requirements for overhead electrical line construction to ensure service and safety in California, and includes provisions that apply to abandoned utility facilities.

General Order 95, Rule 31.6 states:

*Lines or portions of lines permanently abandoned shall be removed by their owners so that such lines shall not become a public nuisance or a hazard to life or property. For the purposes of this rule, lines that are permanently abandoned shall be defined as those lines that are determined by their owner to have no foreseeable future use.*

Rule 31.6 was last updated in 2005 (CPUC Decision 05-01-030). It is up to the utilities, the owners of the idle lines, to decide whether a facility is considered abandoned and should be removed.

In July 2020, it was determined by CAL FIRE that the 2019 Kincade Fire, which burned 77,758 acres in Sonoma County,<sup>4</sup> was caused by PG&E's electrical transmission lines. It was found by the Safety and Enforcement Division of the CPUC in their investigation of the 2019 Kincade Fire that PG&E violated General Order 95 Rule 31.6 regarding abandoned lines.

In response to the Kincade Fire, PG&E was required to pay a \$40 million fine to the General Fund and to not seek rate recovery of capital expenditures in the amount of \$85 million for the permanent removal of abandoned transmission facilities within its service territory, for a total of \$125 million. Part of the agreement included PG&E developing and implementing a comprehensive plan to remove identified permanently abandoned transmission facilities within PG&E's service territory.<sup>5</sup>

In January 2025, with expected severe Santa Ana winds, low-humidity, high vegetation growth from previous wet winters, and dry conditions due to delayed precipitation, Southern California was at high risk for wildfires. Additionally, aerial fire suppression was limited by the extreme winds, which included gusts approaching 100 mph in some areas. The region experienced multiple fires, including the Palisades Fire and the Eaton Fire, two of the most destructive and deadly fires in the state's history. In the case of the Eaton Fire, the fire seems to have originated in the Eaton Canyon, just north of the foothill communities of Altadena and Sierra Madre in Southern California. Due to the high winds, the fire seems to have quickly spread and engulfed much of Altadena and portions of Sierra Madre. The fire resulted in 19 deaths and destroyed

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<sup>4</sup> Sonoma Operational Area and the County of Sonoma Department of Emergency Management, "2019 Kincade Fire After Action Report" March 2020.

<sup>5</sup> CPUC, Resolution SED-6, 2021.

more than 9,000 buildings, becoming the fifth deadliest and second most destructive wildfire in California history. While the investigation as to the cause of the fire is still in process, there is widespread speculation, including by the CEO of the parent company of Southern California Edison, that the cause of the ignition source may have been a dormant electrical transmission facility, one that has been out-of-service for 50 years. The speculation is that the out-of-service transmission line and its towers may have experienced induction – where electromagnetic fields from live circuits could have reenergized the dormant line, causing sparks and a potential ignition source. In this case, the speculation is that the dormant line experienced induction from active high-voltage transmission lines that may have been about 60-100 feet away, perhaps with failures in any grounding measures.

#### COMMENTS:

- 1) *Author's Statement.* According to the author, “Over the past decade, California’s wildfires have destroyed a total of 53,970 structures and claimed 207 lives, with numerous incidents traced back to electrical infrastructure failures. The Eaton and Palisades fires in Los Angeles County alone destroyed 16,246 structures and caused 30 deaths, ranking it amongst the most destructive. UCLA estimates the broader economic impact for Los Angeles County could reach \$131 billion, with up to \$45 billion in insured losses and \$297 million in lost wages. To address this crisis, the Legislature has strengthened oversight of electrical utilities through Wildfire Mitigation Plans, system hardening, and Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS). However, there is still a gap we need to address in prevention and communication when these catastrophic events occur. It has been reported that an idle transmission line that had not carried electricity for over 50 years may have sparked the Eaton Fire. In response to the wildfire risks posed by abandoned infrastructure, SB 742 requires the removal of permanently decommissioned power lines and requires utilities to collaborate with regional emergency centers to better navigate wildfire and emergency response situations.”
- 2) *Purpose of Bill.* This bill seeks to address the public safety and wildfire risks posed by permanently abandoned and idle transmission facilities that remain in place across electrical corporation service territories without adequate oversight or removal requirements. The risks associated with idle transmission lines – including induction hazards – are documented, most notably in connection with the 2019 Kincade Fire and more recently in speculation surrounding the cause of the 2025 Eaton Fire. Currently, the determination of whether a transmission line will be used in the foreseeable future is left largely to the discretion of the utility. This bill seeks to shift that burden by requiring electrical corporations to demonstrate to the CPUC, with appropriate documentation, whether a facility will be returned to service, rather than leaving that determination solely to the utility.

Additionally, the bill intends to strengthen wildfire mitigation for idle and out-of-service lines by requiring the CPUC to ensure applicable safety measures are in place until such facilities are removed, and by mandating their explicit inclusion in WMPs reviewed by Energy Safety.

- 3) *Scale of the Issue.* Based on data requests by Energy Safety of the state’s electrical corporations, the utilities identify the following number of miles of idle transmission lines in their service territory within the high fire risk areas:

- Liberty Utilities – 0 miles
- PacificCorp – 0 miles
- PG&E – 2.25 miles
- SDG&E – 14.69 miles
- SCE – 355 miles

However, Energy Safety is still undergoing a review of these facilities, approaches, and how best to identify them, including how each utility defines idle and abandoned facilities.<sup>6</sup>

- 4) *Costs.* By explicitly requiring electrical corporations to account for transmission facilities (both in and out-of-service) and wildfire mitigation measures for idle and abandoned transmission lines within the WMP, these proposed measures would fall within the cost and time considerations required by SB 254 (Becker, 2025). In other words, the safety measures required under this bill would need to be considered based on how soon they could be implemented, at what cost, and in comparison, to alternatives. Additionally, these costs could be eligible for the up to \$6 billion of expenditures that electrical corporations are prohibited from including in their equity rate base per SB 254, though it would depend on the timing of implementing and recovering these measures and whether they are subject to CPUC review or rate recovery review by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (which generally oversees rates for transmission). In the case of the changes to GO 95, the CPUC would need to make determinations as to the appropriate definition for abandoned lines, as the bill does not provide a specific timeframe, presumably to allow the CPUC to take into consideration safety and affordability concerns. Nonetheless, there are likely to be some, potentially significant, costs that may need to be recovered from ratepayers to implement these measures. These will need to be balanced against the risks of catastrophic fires which in the case of the Eaton Fire are estimated to be \$20-45 billion dollars in damages.
- 5) *Defining a Key Term: “out of service”.* The Committee recommends technical, clarifying amendments to Section 726.8(d). The bill currently uses the term “out of service” in defining a permanently abandoned transmission facility but does not define that term. The amendment clarifies that the CPUC shall determine what constitutes an “out of service” transmission facility.
- 6) *Prior Legislation.*  
  
SB 254 (Becker) included various proposals to address electric utility bill affordability and wildfire mitigation measures, including requiring electrical corporations to consider the time required to implement a wildfire mitigation measure and the amount of risk reduced for the costs and risks remaining. Status: Chapter 119, Statutes of 2025.

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<sup>6</sup> Senate Committee on Energy, Utilities and Communications, analysis of Senate Bil 742 (January 12, 2026).

SB 256 (Pérez, 2025), among its provisions, included similar language as this bill when it was heard in the Assembly. Status: Held in the Assembly Committee on Appropriations.

SB 1003 (Dodd, 2024) included some provisions that are similar to those in SB 254 (Becker), would have modified timelines relevant to the WMPs by electrical corporations and required the electrical corporations to take into account both the time required to implement a mitigation measure and the amount of risk reduced for the costs and risks remaining. Status: Held on the Assembly Floor.

SB 533 (Stern) required electrical corporations to identify circuits that have frequently been deenergized to mitigate the risk of wildfire and the measures taken to reduce the need for future deenergization of those circuits, as specified. Status: Chapter 244, Statutes of 2021.

AB 1054 (Holden) included numerous provisions related to addressing wildfires caused by electric utility infrastructure, including bolstering safety oversight and processes, recasting recovery of costs from damages to third parties, including the authorization for an electrical corporation and ratepayer jointly funded Wildfire Fund to address future damages. Status: Chapter 79, Statutes of 2019.

SB 901 (Dodd) addressed numerous issues concerning wildfire prevention, response and recovery, including funding for mutual aid, fuel reduction and forestry policies, WMP by electric utilities, and cost recovery of wildfire-related damages by electrical corporations. Status: Chapter 626, Statutes of 2018.

SB 1028 (Hill) required electrical corporations to file annual WMPs and required the CPUC to review and comment on those plans. Status: Chapter 598, Statutes of 2016.

AB 1650 (Portantino) required the CPUC to establish standards for disaster and emergency preparedness plans within an existing proceeding and authorizes every city and county within the electric IOUs' service area to designate a point of contact for the electrical IOU to consult on emergency disaster preparedness plans. Status: Chapter 472, Statutes of 2012.

## **REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

### **Support**

California Professional Firefighters  
Sustainable Rossmoor  
The Utility Reform Network (TURN)

### **Support if Amended**

City of Torrance

**Opposition**

None on file

**Analysis Prepared by:** Suman Tatapudy / U. & E. / (916) 319-2083