



AB 338 – WILDFIRE MITIGATION PROJECTS

SUMMARY

AB 338 extends prevailing wages to include fuel reduction work performed as part of a wildfire mitigation project, in order to protect communities from wildfires while ensuring fair payment and apprenticeship opportunities for those working on these projects.

BACKGROUND

Catastrophic wildfires have unfortunately become an annual occurrence in California. In 2021 alone the state saw 8,786 active wildfires that burned approximately 2,568,941 acres of land, destroyed 3,629 structures, and, most devastating of all, took the lives of three California citizens.

Given this new reality, the state has placed a strong emphasis on wildfire mitigation work as a means to reduce the intensity of wildfire season. In the 2021-2022 budget, the Governor and Legislature appropriated \$1.5 billion towards wildfire prevention in an effort to protect California communities from wildfires, and additionally ensured multi-year funding towards wildfire mitigation by requiring that \$200 million from the greenhouse gas reduction fund be spent annually on wildfire mitigation until 2028.

THE PROBLEM

Wildfire mitigation involves the implementation of a variety of precautionary measures to protect communities from the spread of wildfires; specifically, wildfire mitigation tasks typically include but are not limited to residential chipping, rural road fuel breaks, fire breaks, and vegetation management.

Simply put, successful wildfire mitigation involves the removal or thinning of natural fuels, including brush, and dead or dying trees, in order to limit the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire. These projects are essential to protecting communities.

While wildfire mitigation is often talked about as a mechanism to protect houses from wildfires, wildfire mitigation is also a critical component of protecting various public works, including transportation infrastructure, public schools, and public buildings. In this sense, wildfire mitigation can and should be seen as a “maintenance activity” that is heavily needed to ensure the safety and functionality of existing public works.

Legislation is needed to ensure that contracted-out wildfire mitigation work ensures fair payment for the workers participating in these projects and to provide apprenticeship opportunities and worker safety training for aspiring tradesman.

THIS BILL

In an effort to protect communities and existing public works from the devastating impacts of wildfires, AB 338 extends prevailing wages to include fuel reduction work performed as part of a wildfire mitigation project, including, but not limited to, residential chipping, rural road fuel breaks, fire breaks, and vegetation management. By extending prevailing wages for fuel reduction work, the State will continue to show its commitment to the protection of our communities, fair wages for workers, as well as the development of California-based apprentices.

SUPPORT

California State Council of Laborers (Co-Sponsor)
International Union of Operating Engineers, Cal-Nevada Conference (Co-Sponsor)
California Labor Federation, AFL-CIO
District Council 16, International Union of Painters and Allied Trades
Pacific States Environmental Contractors, Inc.
Southern California Contractors Association
State Building and Construction Trades Council of CA
United Contractors

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