

State Emergency Alert Legislation Signed into Law

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State Senator Mike McGuire's landmark legislation, SB 833, establishing statewide emergency alert protocols and regulation became law on Friday when signed by California Gov. Jerry Brown.

"Bottom line, this legislation will save lives. With the passage of SB 833, statewide emergency alert standards will be developed, training for local emergency managers will be implemented and we will be investing in a more proactive and effective mutual aid response system," McGuire said. "The size and scope of wildland fires in California has grown exponentially over the past decade and a universal emergency alert system can't come soon enough."

The legislation was introduced by Sen. McGuire in partnership with Senators Bill Dodd and Jerry Hill and Assemblymembers Cecilia Aguiar-Curry, Marc Levine and Jim Wood.

The legislation, for the first time, advances statewide emergency alert standards that all of California's 58 counties can adopt.

Statewide emergency evacuation alert protocols will be developed by a working group that will include emergency responders and public safety leaders from across the state, as well as local elected officials, disability advocates, radio and television broadcasters and representatives from the telecommunication and wireless industries.

The legislation will also advance annual training for local emergency managers on how to best utilize alert software and how to deploy alerts, and will develop procedures to send alerts via multiple communication mediums, including radio, television and electronic highway billboards.

The North Bay Firestorm destroyed over 6,000 homes, scorched more than 170,000 acres, caused billions in damage, and resulted in the death of more than 40 residents.

"The night of Oct. 8 changed the lives of North Bay residents forever, when tens of thousands of residents were caught unaware that a massive wildland fire was about to engulf their home or business, because they did not receive an emergency alert," McGuire said. "While there are hundreds of harrowing stories of bravery that night, regrettably, thousands of residents never received a warning."

The critical importance of creating a statewide emergency alert protocol was again recognized when some residents in Shasta County didn't get adequate notice of evacuations during the deadly Carr fire.

SB 833 was supported by the California Professional Firefighters, California Fire Chiefs Association, Rural County Representatives of California, the League of California Cities and many others.

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