

Date of Hearing: May 11, 2022

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Chris Holden, Chair

AB 2477 (Rodriguez) – As Amended March 16, 2022

Policy Committee: Emergency Management

Vote: 7 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: No

Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill requires, by July 1, 2023, the Office of Emergency Services (OES) to adopt regulations setting minimum operating standards for private sector companies providing alert and warning services to local entities. After regulations are adopted, all providers must notify OES if a disruption in service or a cybersecurity incident occurs. OES must then notify any applicable county office of emergency services, the county sheriff and any public safety answering point affected by the service disruption.

FISCAL EFFECT:

Annual General Fund costs of approximately \$2.1 million to OES for four additional positions within OES's 911 Branch and four additional positions within OES's California State Warning Center (CSWC) to monitor disruptions in service or cybersecurity incidents and provide notification to affected local governments. OES would also incur one-time costs to develop the regulations.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** According to the author, local emergency managers rely on private service contractors to issue emergency alerts and warnings regarding fires, floods, extreme temperatures, areas to avoid due to police activity and other hazardous activities. Given the importance of emergency alert and warning programs to local communities, the author believes "[OES] should develop minimum operating standards for private sector vendors to ensure these platforms are resilient to all types of disasters...and ensure there are consistent and timely reporting mechanisms of any disruptions in a private sector's ability to send alerts and warnings due to a cyber attack or other incident." This bill is supported by fire chief and fire district associations and Disability Rights California.
- 2) **CSWC.** OES's CSWC is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to identify potential and emerging threats across the state, give alert notification of threats to all levels of government and provide critical situational awareness during an emergency or disaster. CSWC staff make over 1 million notifications annually due to weather-related warnings, fires, power outages, seismic incidents and other potentially significant incidents that may have emergency management impacts.
- 3) **Other Alert Systems.** The Integrated Public Alert and Warning System is the national system providing authenticated emergency and life-saving information to the public through

mobile phones via Wireless Emergency Alerts and through radio and television via the Emergency Alert System.

In recent years, California has experienced severe problems warning citizens in times of disaster and emergency, resulting in the tragic loss of lives. After the 2017 and 2018 fire seasons, it became clear that not all jurisdictions were prepared to issue emergency alerts. SB 833 (McGuire), Chapter 617, Statutes of 2018, required OES to develop voluntary best practices for local governments to use when sending public alerts, with local governments bearing the ultimate responsibility to issue warnings. Each county has its own alerting program through which residents can sign up to receive alerts. Many cities also have their own unique alerting programs, provided through different vendors and systems.

This bill requires OES to develop regulations to set minimum operating standards for these private alert and warning services providers, including when providers must alert OES of service disruptions or cyber attacks, for communication by OES to local governments. Presumably, OES would consult with local stakeholders regarding regulations impacting these local government warning services, but such collaboration is not specified in this bill. For example, local government entities may prefer to be directly and immediately notified of service disruptions by their contracted vendor, instead of getting the information from OES.

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