

Resistance to expansion of cell transmitters

By Rennie Svirnovskiy, Sacramento Bee

Dave Roberts has seen plenty of calamitous fires, and the lingering thought after they're extinguished always is, "If we'd only been there sooner."

The El Dorado Hills fire chief knows well that for every minute a structure fire burns, it doubles in size, putting both civilians and his firefighters at risk. He also knows there has to be a way to cut response times.

That's why he and the California State Sheriffs' Association have joined with California telecommunications companies and chambers of commerce to back legislation aimed at providing a more robust system of cellular telephone service. Senate Bill 649 would make it easier and cheaper for the companies to place small transmitters in cities and counties. More cells, they argue, will improve service and add critical redundancy to phone systems in areas affected by wildfires or other natural disasters.

But as the bill breezes through the Legislature with few dissenting votes, hundreds of city and county governments are pushing back.

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