

# Fires prompt bill to improve emergency alert system

By Joaquin Palomino, San Francisco Chronicle

North Bay lawmakers have introduced a bill to bolster the ability of emergency officials to contact residents who may be in harm's way – a topic that has been scrutinized since last year's devastating wildfires.

The legislation, introduced by multiple lawmakers, including state Sen. Mike McGuire, D-Healdsburg, would create uniform statewide emergency notification protocols. It also would require all counties to develop and adopt guidelines for using Wireless Emergency Alerts, a federally administered system that can send Amber Alert-style messages to cell phones in a disaster area.

As the *Chronicle* and others have reported, many North Bay residents said they received no official warning and were blindsided by the rapidly spreading flames that sparked in multiple counties in October.

Some experts said that statewide systems can be useful for regional or large-scale disasters, but in smaller incidents notification decisions are often better left to local leaders.

**Read the whole story**