

Sent via ELECTRONIC MAIL to: zevfleet@arb.ca.gov

May 2, 2025

Ms. Liane Randolph
Chair
California Air Resources Board
Sacramento, CA 95812-0100

RE: Comment Letter – Advanced Clean Fleets Regulation/AB 1594 Amendments

Dear Chair Randolph,

The Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) appreciates that the California Air Resources Board (CARB) is taking additional time in the AB 1594 process to amend the Advanced Clean Fleets regulation (ACF) to better reflect additional flexibilities needed by public agency utilities to maintain critical operations and comply with ACF. ACWA represents approximately 470 public water agencies that collectively deliver approximately 90 percent of the water in California for domestic, agricultural, and industrial uses. We encourage taking the time to hear additional input from public agency utilities, including water and wastewater agencies, to ensure necessary changes are made to promote fleet electrification, where feasible, without compromising public agency utilities from being able to maintain essential public services and critical operations, including during emergency events. ACWA will work to provide examples to CARB staff that detail how water and wastewater agency fleet operations have been impacted by emergency events that impact the ability to comply with ACF.

1. AB 1594 process must consider the essential operations of public agency utilities in creating flexibility to ensure reliability for fleets complying with ACF.

It is important for the AB 1594 process to acknowledge and support public agency utilities' essential operations, including mutual aid and emergency response, and recognize the expertise of local officials in determining the types of medium- and heavy-duty (MHD) utility specialty vehicles needed to support public safety in their communities. ACF establishes strict requirements for public agency utilities to purchase exclusively zero-emissions vehicles (ZEVs), including specialized utility vehicles. While ACF allows fleet owners to apply for exemptions, the conditions for eligibility are extremely limited and do not adequately reflect public agency utilities' operational needs. Moreover, the viability of the existing exemption process should be revisited as CARB has denied requests by ACWA members which would appear to qualify per the stated eligibility criteria. Water and wastewater agencies must maintain the ability to support their wide range of operations and ensure an available fleet of vehicles to provide reliable service and respond to emergencies of any scope. Administering a workable exemption process is a critical precursor to ensuring public agency utilities can maintain their ability to provide these essential public services.

2. Effective administration of ACF should balance compliance with the ability to respond to emergencies.

Water and wastewater agency fleets must be able to rely upon their MHD specialty vehicles during local emergency response efforts. Water and wastewater agencies, and other essential public agency utilities, are charged with maintaining operations even during emergencies, and are often involved in mutual aid efforts during emergencies like the 2025 LA events. The 2025 LA events provide us with a recent example of the crucial role that ACWA members play in local emergency response efforts. These events remind us of comments made throughout the ACF process pushing the necessity to consider worst case scenario events (where public agency utility fleets must respond rapidly, for extended periods of time, and often in remote areas that lack the necessary charging infrastructure) where there needs to be flexibility in ACF to ensure successful emergency response. ACWA members have been involved as first-responders in numerous emergency events in recent years related to wildfires, wind events, and flooding events with similar takeaways.

3. CARB should also consider the availability of ZEVs as public agency utilities work to comply with ACF.

ACF implementation must reflect the market availability of ZEVs and consider the heightened cost increases that public agency utilities will face. CARB's current ability to enforce ACF, following removal of the ability to enforce ACF on private fleets, will result in increased prices for public agency utilities because the market has become smaller. At this stage in ACF implementation, water and wastewater agencies face challenges in finding available ZEVs that meet their fleet needs. In cases where ZEV equivalents are available to replace traditional internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles, such alternatives cost more and lack the performance capability of their ICE vehicle counterparts. To compound matters, the Trump Administration has expressed its intent through various Executive Orders to eliminate electric vehicle subsidies and policies mandating stricter emissions standards, which we fear will only further restrict purchase options for water and wastewater agencies who need to maintain their fleets' capability to provide first-responder services and ensure essential operations stay online.

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ACF is a priority issue for our members, who played an instrumental role with our MHD utility vehicles during the 2025 LA events and do so in many other emergency events across the state. It is for reasons like this that ACWA prioritizes being a part of CARB's Truck Regulatory Implementation Group to help navigate ACF implementation and participate in the Energy Commission's Clean Transportation Program Advisory Committee to ensure that public agency utility fleet needs are prioritized for MHD charging infrastructure funding. We look forward to working with CARB to develop workable solutions, which should include mutual aid efforts and emergency response, moving forward in ACF implementation through the AB 1594 process. ACWA appreciates CARB's consideration of these comments. If you have any questions or would like to discuss the comments, please contact Nick Blair at nickb@acwa.com or (916) 669-2377.

Sincerely,

Nick Blair

Nick Blair
Senior Policy Advocate
Association of California Water Agencies

cc:

The Honorable Dr. Steve Cliff, Executive Director, CARB

Mr. Marwan Khalifa, Interim Executive Director, Association of California Water Agencies

Ms. Cindy Tuck, Deputy Executive Director, Association of California Water Agencies