
Local Government & Housing Committee

HB 2854

Brief Description: Coordinating planning and reporting with regard to a bioterrorism incident.

Sponsors: Representatives Schual-Berke, Haigh, Morris, Barlean, O'Brien, Hurst, Hatfield, Anderson, Chase, Uptegrove and Rockefeller.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Emergency Management Council to supervise development of an internet-based system for communication among health care professionals regarding public health emergency situations.
- Requires the Emergency Management Council to develop a public health emergency response plan.

Hearing Date: 2/6/02

Staff: Caroleen Dineen (786-7156).

Background:

The state Military Department (Military Department) administers a comprehensive program of emergency management in the state. The Adjutant General, the director of the Military Department, is required to develop an "all hazard" comprehensive emergency management plan including an analysis of the natural, technological, or human-caused hazards that could affect the state. The Adjutant General also must verify local emergency management plans' consistency with the state plan. With the Governor's approval, the Adjutant General may agree with federal officials on an emergency management plan for federally owned areas within the state.

The Emergency Management Council (Council) is a 17-member council that advises the Governor and the Adjutant General on state and local emergency management matters. The Council members are appointed by the Governor and include representatives of at least the following:

- city and county governments;
- sheriffs and police chiefs;
- Washington State Patrol;
- Military Department;
- Department of Ecology;
- state and local fire chiefs;
- seismic safety experts;
- state and local emergency management directors;
- search and rescue volunteers;
- medical professions who have expertise in emergency medical care;
- building officials; and
- private industry with knowledge of emergency and hazardous materials management.

Among other duties, the Council must ensure the Governor receives an annual assessment of state-wide emergency preparedness that considers numerous factors.

Summary of Bill:

The Emergency Management Council (Council) is required to supervise the development of an internet-based communications system by which any licensed health care professional in the state can post notices of and communicate with other professionals about observed signs and symptoms that may be indicative of a bioterrorist event, a potential public health emergency related to bioterrorism, or other type of terrorist attack. Development and use of the system does not affect statutory and regulatory requirements for health care professionals to report contagious diseases.

The Council may contract with state or local agencies or private industry to develop the system. The system must be capable of providing links to educational materials, and all licensed health care providers in the state must be informed of and provided instruction on the system.

System development must be completed within four months of enactment, and the Adjutant General must submit a report to the Legislature no later than December 1, 2002, on the development and implementation of the system.

The Council is also required to prepare a public health emergency response plan for emergencies caused by or related to bioterrorism or other types of terrorist attacks. The plan must cover numerous items, including provisions for:

- notifying and communicating with the population during a state of public health emergency;
- centralized coordination of resources, personnel, and services, and integration of public health response into the incident command structure under emergency management statutes;
- identification of actions needed to contain the spread or transmission of any communicable disease that poses a substantial risk of adverse health consequences to the

public, including essential materials, vaccinations, isolation, quarantine, training, and tracking source and outcomes of infected persons;

- identification and training of health care providers to diagnose and treat persons with infectious diseases;
- guidelines for treatment of exposed and infected persons and communities in a bioterrorism situation, including coverage for specific infectious agents;
- county identification of sites for isolation, quarantine, essential materials distribution, and emergency worker housing, and transportation routes; and
- language, cultural norms, values, and traditions that may be relevant in effectively dealing with a public health crisis.

The plan must be developed by the Council, approved by the Adjutant General, and delivered to the Governor and the Legislature no later than six months after enactment.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested February 5, 2002.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Expiration Date: The public health emergency response plan provisions (Section 3) expire June 30, 2003.