

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2624

*As Reported By House Committee on:
State Government*

Title: An act relating to mobilization of fire service resources.

Brief Description: Creating the Washington state fire services mobilization plan.

Sponsor(s): Representatives Orr, Mitchell, Wood, Belcher, R. Meyers, Anderson, Prince, Chandler, Wineberry, Bray, Paris and R. King.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
State Government, February 7, 1992, DP.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
STATE GOVERNMENT**

Majority Report: *Do pass.* Signed by 10 members: Representatives Anderson, Chair; Pruitt, Vice Chair; McLean, Ranking Minority Member; Bowman, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Chandler; R. Fisher; Grant; Moyer; O'Brien; and Sheldon.

Staff: Linda May (786-7135).

Background: Responsibility for fire response is currently divided among local fire departments, the Fire Protection Services Division of the Department of Community Development, and the Division of Fire Control in the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

Summary of Bill: To meet the increasing potential for disastrous fires, it is declared necessary to create a state fire service mobilization plan, and to provide a means for reimbursing fire jurisdictions that incur expenses when mobilized by the director of the Department of Community Development (DCD).

The director of DCD is specifically authorized to employ personnel and make expenditures within available appropriations to carry out the plan. Responsibility for developing and maintaining the plan is assigned to the state fire marshal, assistant director of the Division of Fire

Protection Services in DCD. The state fire marshal is directed to work with the Division of Fire Control in DNR.

A State Fire Defense Board is created, with the state fire marshal as chair, and the chief of fire control in DNR, the assistant director for emergency management in DCD, and regional fire resources coordinators as members. The board serves in an advisory capacity to the director.

Regional fire defense boards are also established for each of seven specified regions in the state. Such boards consist of one representative from each county in the region. Members are appointed by the director from recommendations by local fire organizations within the county. The state fire marshal or a designee will serve as a member of each regional board. The chief of fire control in DNR appoints representatives from the department's regions to the boards. Each board selects a regional fire resources coordinator, who serves at the pleasure of the regional board.

Each board must develop a regional fire service plan to allow organized fire agencies to respond across jurisdictional lines under interlocal agreements.

A Washington state fire mobilization account is created in the state treasury. The director is required to prepare an appropriation request for the account each year to cover anticipated requests to reimburse the costs of emergency fire suppression.

Fiscal Note: Requested January 30, 1992.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: There is a saying among firefighters that failing to plan is planning to fail. The huge fires in Spokane last summer proved this adage. By the time people were mobilized from outside the area, the existing resources were tapped to the limit. When others were called, there was no plan in place to coordinate the effort, nor was there any identified coordinator, nor was there a mechanism clearly in place to reimburse those who came. When the call for help came, firefighting units responded without question and would do so again; however, many jurisdictions are still waiting to be reimbursed. Lack of a state plan also complicates getting federal reimbursement under the Federal Emergency Management Act. A plan would help protect the welfare and safety of the public. The bill contains no provisions for the planners to be paid; they are all willing to do this on a voluntary basis.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: (All in favor): Representative George Orr; Otto Jensen, Washington State Association of Fire Chiefs; Dan Brown, Spokane Fire Department; Patrick Vollandt, Mountlake Terrace Fire Department; Steve Bailey, Seattle Fire Department; and Stan Biles, Department of Natural Resources.