

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESHB 2624

*As Passed House
February 17, 1992*

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

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

Sponsor(s): By House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by 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;
Appropriations, February 9, 1992, DPS;
Passed House, February 17, 1992, 97-0.

**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).

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
APPROPRIATIONS**

Majority Report: *The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass.* Signed by 25 members: Representatives Locke, Chair; Inslee, Vice Chair; Spanel, Vice Chair; Silver, Ranking Minority Member; Morton, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Appelwick; Belcher; Bowman; Brekke; Carlson; Dorn; Ebersole; Hine; Lisk; May; Mielke; Nealey; Peery; Pruitt; Rust; D. Sommers; H. Sommers; Valle; Vance; and Wang.

Staff: Nancy Stevenson (786-7137).

Background: Responsibility for fire control is 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). While there are some mutual aid agreements in place among local jurisdictions to provide for the sharing of resources, there is no statewide plan in place for the mobilization of firefighting resources on a larger scale.

Summary of Bill: For the purposes of this act, the state is divided into seven regions, and a regional fire defense board is created within each region. Each regional board is to develop a regional fire service plan that includes provisions for organized fire agencies to respond to fires or other disasters across municipal, county, or regional boundaries. Each regional plan is to be consistent with the incident command system, the state fire services mobilization plan, and other regional response plans already adopted and in use in the state. Counties within the regions and DNR select the members of the regional fire defense boards; these members serve in a voluntary capacity and are not eligible for reimbursement from the state for meeting-related expenses.

A state fire defense board is created, comprised of the state fire marshal, a representative from DNR, and a representative from each of the regional fire defense boards. The state board is to develop the Washington state fire services mobilization plan, which shall include the procedures to be used during fire emergencies for coordinating local, regional, and state fire jurisdiction resources. The state board will also approve each regional fire service plan. Members serving on the state board also do so in a voluntary capacity and are not eligible for reimbursement for meeting-related expenses.

The director of the Department of Community Development is to review the state fire services mobilization plan, recommend any necessary changes, and then approve the fire services plan for inclusion in the state's comprehensive emergency management plan. The director has the responsibility to mobilize jurisdictions under the state fire services mobilization plan.

The Department of Community Development in consultation with the Office of Financial Management is to develop procedures to facilitate reimbursement to jurisdictions from appropriate federal and state funds when the director mobilizes jurisdictions under the state fire services plan.

Fiscal Note: Requested January 30, 1992.

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

Testimony For: (State Government): 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.

(Appropriations): The fire mobilization plan is needed. Procedures for reimbursement need to be established. Support the amendments.

Testimony Against: (State Government): None.

(Appropriations): None.

Witnesses: (State Government - 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.

(Appropriations): Otto Jensen, Washington State Association of Fire Chiefs (pro).