

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 6272

AS PASSED SENATE, FEBRUARY 12, 1992

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

SPONSORS: Senate Committee on Governmental Operations (originally sponsored by Senators McCaslin, Madsen, Sutherland, Matson and Roach)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6272 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators McCaslin, Chairman; Roach, Vice Chairman; Madsen, and Sutherland.

Staff: Barbara Howard (786-7410)

Hearing Dates: February 5, 1992

BACKGROUND:

The firestorm in the Spokane area last October covered 36,500 acres, cost one life and inflicted millions of dollars of property damage. Fire resources in Spokane County were all committed within the first three hours of the first day, and all mutual aid resources were quickly depleted. By the fourth day, the city and county declared a state of emergency. Eventually, almost 200 pieces of additional equipment and a large number of firefighters were sent from western Washington and Oregon to join the effort.

Governor Gardner declared a state of emergency, which was accepted by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. A 75-25 federal matching formula for reimbursement to participating state and local agencies is available, but only if the state has an effective plan in place for that particular type of disaster. A draft plan has been prepared, but there is no direct statutory requirement for the plan.

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:

To meet the increasing potential for disastrous fires, it is declared necessary to provide the policy and organizational structure by creating a state fire service mobilization plan, and providing a means for reimbursing fire jurisdictions that

incur expenses when mobilized by the Director of the Department of Community Development (DCD).

The director 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 the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

"Mobilization" is defined as responding to requests for sending fire fighting resources to fight a fire that has or will soon exceed local resources. During a large-scale fire emergency, redistribution of regional and state resources is also required. Procedures for coordinating local, regional and state fire jurisdiction resources during fire emergencies must be included in the plan.

A State Fire Defense Board is created, with the State Fire Marshal as chair, the Chief of Fire Control in DNR, the Assistant Director for Emergency Management in DCD, and regional fire resources coordinators. 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 (each of the 39 counties is included in a region). Such boards consist of one representative from each county and 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.

The director, in cooperation with the Fire Protection Policy Board, is given rule-making power to implement the program. A Washington State fire mobilization account is created in the state treasury. Receipts from legislative appropriations for implementing the fire mobilization plan are deposited in the account. 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.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: none requested

TESTIMONY FOR: None

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED: No one