

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 6023

As Passed House - Amended
March 2, 1994

Title: An act relating to emergency management.

Brief Description: Transferring emergency management functions from the department of community development to the military department.

Sponsors: Senators Winsley and Haugen.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
State Government, February 24, 1994, DPA;
Passed House - Amended, March 2, 1994, 96-0.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Anderson, Chair; Veloria, Vice Chair; Reams, Ranking Minority Member; L. Thomas, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Campbell; Conway; Dyer; King and Pruitt.

Staff: Bonnie Austin (786-7135).

Background: Since World War II, the state's functions relating to emergency management (disaster planning and response) have been organizationally separate from the Military Department. The original structure was the old Civil Defense Department; in 1986, it was merged into the Department of Community Development as the Division of Emergency Management.

In most instances, emergency management personnel are civilians and can be mobilized to assist with disasters. However, during a major disaster such as the eruption of Mount St. Helens in 1980, the Governor mobilizes the National Guard and assigns it the command responsibility.

In approximately half of the states, emergency management functions are administered under the Military Department. It has been reported that during major disasters, such as during the flooding in the Midwest last summer, this combination has increased timely response, efficiency and coordination.

Summary of Bill: Administration of the state's comprehensive emergency management program is transferred from the Department of Community Development (DCD) to the Military Department.

All powers and duties, personnel and equipment, rules and pending business are transferred from DCD to the Military Department. Standard transfer provisions are included.

Current DCD policy with regard to reimbursement of out-of-jurisdiction fire fighters called into service under a mobilization plan is codified.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect July 1, 1994.

Testimony For: The Department of Community Development (DCD) has not managed this program well. They have spent \$800,000 on equipment located in a deteriorating building. Ten million dollars is needed to refurbish the building. This equipment should be moved to the Military Department. Washington is very vulnerable to earthquakes, and we are not prepared. Moving this program to the Military Department eliminates the middleman and results in savings. The National Guard provides 24-hour coverage and DCD does not.

Local emergency managers strongly support the move, because this program is not a priority in DCD or in the new organization of the new Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development. DCD also does not understand the command structure necessary to a successful emergency management program. The United States military is taking a greater role in disaster response. This bill eliminates duplication, allows for the coordination of planning and training, and provides daily contact among response entities.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Senator Winsley, prime sponsor (pro); Senator Haugen (pro); Neil Clement, Washington State Emergency Management Association (pro); Bill Lokey, Pierce County Emergency Management (pro); and Keith Eggen, former Adjutant General of National Guard (pro).