

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 1517

As Reported by House Committee On:

Commerce & Labor

Title: An act relating to the occupational safety and health of fire department employees.

Brief Description: Establishing objectives for certain fire department services.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Commerce & Labor: 2/5/04 [DP2S].

Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill

- Requires substantially career fire departments to maintain written policies on their services, turnout times, response times, and other performance objectives.
- Requires substantially career fire departments to make annual evaluations of and issue annual reports on their services and performance objectives.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR

Majority Report: The second substitute bill be substituted therefor and the second substitute bill do pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Conway, Chair; Wood, Vice Chair; Hudgins, Kenney and McCoy.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives McMorris, Ranking Minority Member; Condotta, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Crouse and Holmquist.

Staff: Jill Reinmuth (786-7134).

Background:

The Department of Labor and Industries (Department) administers and enforces the Washington Industrial Safety and Health Act (WISHA). Under WISHA, the Department must adopt rules governing safety and health standards for most workplaces. These standards include general standards that apply to most industries, as well as additional specific standards for certain industries.

The specific standards for fire fighting apply to all activities related to providing fire protection services. There are also specific standards applicable to fire suppression equipment, wildland fire fighting, and industrial fire brigades. These standards make reference to some National Fire Protection Association standards, but not those that address the organization or deployment of fire departments.

Summary of Second Substitute Bill:

The intent of the Legislature is to set standards for addressing the occupational safety and health of substantially career fire department employees, and to specify performance measures applicable to response time objectives. These performance measures are comparable to research relating to substantially career fire department organization and deployment. It is not the intent of the Legislature to modify or limit the Department of Labor and Industries' authority to adopt rules under the Washington Industrial Safety and Health Act that are applicable to fire departments or that otherwise address the occupational safety and health of firefighters.

Substantially career fire departments must maintain written policies specifying fire department services, organizational structure, expected number of employees, and functions. In addition, they must maintain written policies specifying turnout time, response time, and performance objectives. Finally, they must make annual evaluations of their levels of service, turnout times, and response times. Beginning in 2006, they must also issue annual reports that specify circumstances in which objectives are not being met, and address the steps necessary to achieve compliance.

Definitions are added for multiple terms, including "advanced life support," "aircraft rescue and fire fighting," "brain death," "fire suppression," "first responder," "flash-over," "marine rescue and fire fighting," and "response time," "special operations," and "turnout time."

Second Substitute Bill Compared to Substitute Bill:

The intent section is modified to acknowledge the efforts of not only the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), but also the International City/County Management Association and the International Association of Fire Chiefs, for the organization and deployment of resources for fire departments. It is also modified to express that the arrival of first responders before the onset of brain death and adequate fire suppression resources before flash-over is in the public's best interest. References to specific NFPA standards are omitted. The purpose of establishing time objectives is specified as measuring the ability to arrive and begin mitigation operations before brain death or flash-over. Definitions are added for "brain death" and "flash-over." The first year in which annual reports on service levels and time objectives is changed from 2005 to 2006. Other technical changes are made.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: None.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: None.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.