
Commerce & Labor Committee

HB 1517

Brief Description: Establishing objectives for certain fire department services.

Sponsors: Representatives Cooper, Simpson, Conway, Sullivan and Wallace.

Brief Summary of Bill

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

Hearing Date: 2/27/03

Staff: Jill Reinmuth (786-7134).

Background:

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) is an international nonprofit association. Its mission is "to reduce the worldwide burden of fire and other hazards on the quality of life by developing and advocating scientifically based consensus codes and standards, research, training, and education." Its activities include developing fire codes and standards. In 2001 NFPA developed and approved standards for the organization and deployment of career fire departments (NFPA Standard 1710) and volunteer fire departments (NFPA Standard 1720).

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 NFPA standards, but not those that address the organization or deployment of fire departments.

Summary of Bill:

The intent of the Legislature is to specify the minimum criteria for addressing the safety and health of fire department employees, and to establish response time objectives. The minimum criteria are comparable to National Fire Protection Association Standards 1710 and 1720 relating to fire department organization and deployment.

Fire protection districts and other 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 2005, 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," "fire suppression," "first responder," "marine rescue and fire fighting," and "response time," "special operations," and "turnout time."

These requirements are added to the Washington Industrial Safety and Health Act (WISHA).

Rules Authority: The bill does not address the rule-making authority of an agency.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 19, 2003.

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