

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SHB 1271

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Technology & Communications, March 24, 2003

**Title:** An act relating to enhancing interoperability of the state's emergency communication systems.

**Brief Description:** Enhancing interoperability of emergency communications.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Technology, Telecommunications & Energy (originally sponsored by Representatives Anderson, Morris and Wood).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Technology & Communications: 3/20/03, 3/24/03 [DP].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY & COMMUNICATIONS

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Esser, Chair; Finkbeiner, Vice Chair; Eide, Reardon, Schmidt and Stevens.

**Staff:** Dario de la Rosa (786-7484)

**Background:** The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) requires states to study their emergency communications systems. The Washington State Information Services Board conducted a preliminary review and found that all levels of government have responsibilities for providing public safety and emergency services. The committee also found that the ability of emergency communications officials to communicate with each other is essential for providing services that are essential to the life, health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of the state of Washington.

State and local government agencies are responsible for operating their own communications equipment and systems. Agencies often purchase dissimilar emergency communication equipment which may impede communication between neighboring agencies. These systems range from technology dating from the 1960s to modern digital voice and data systems. A diversity of equipment has also created a need for a larger number of radio frequencies.

In 2006, the FCC will reorganize and reallocate new public safety radio frequencies to accommodate the increase in communication systems and new technology.

**Summary of Bill:** The State Interoperability Executive Committee is established within the Department of Information Services. Committee responsibilities include planning and developing policies and making recommendations for wireless radio communication technical standards to the Information Services Board.

Committee responsibilities include coordinating and managing the licensing and use of state-designated and state-licensed radio frequencies, including emergency communications frequencies, seeking support for state-sponsored wireless communications, developing legislation that may be required to promote interoperability of state communication systems, and fostering cooperation and coordination between public safety and emergency response organizations and between public and private wireless communications groups.

Other responsibilities include making an inventory of state and local government-owned public safety communications systems, and creating a statewide public safety communications plan. The plan includes specific goals for improving interoperability of public communications systems and identifiable benchmarks for achieving those goals. The inventory of communications equipment and public safety plans are presented to the proper legislative committee.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect on July 1, 2003.

**Testimony For:** Because of overloads, the emergency communications system in King County failed during the Nisqually Earthquake. By making the Strategic Interoperability Executive Committee permanent, a forum is created where spectrum issues can be discussed and managed. This bill takes a measured approach at managing emergency communications, and will promote interoperability between first responders. Local governments need to be included in the committee because their interests and needs may be different from other governmental agencies.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** Representative Glenn Anderson, prime sponsor (pro); Marie Sullivan, Department of Information Services (pro); Roy Lum, Department of Information Services (pro); Tammy Fellin, Association of Washington Cities (pro with concerns).