

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SSB 5975

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As Passed Senate, March 12, 2003

**Title:** An act relating to coordinating emergency communications systems by forming the state interoperability executive committee.

**Brief Description:** Forming the state interoperability executive committee.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Technology & Communications (originally sponsored by Senators Reardon, Esser, Poulsen, Finkbeiner and Schmidt).

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Technology & Communications: 3/3/03 [DPS].

Passed Senate: 3/12/03, 49-0.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY & COMMUNICATIONS

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5975 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Esser, Chair; Finkbeiner, Vice Chair; Eide, Poulsen, 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:** Requested on February 26, 2003.

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

**Testimony For:** Communications technology is changing at a rapid rate. Agencies at all levels need to communicate in real time. This is a measured approach to enhance safety. This bill gives the Information Services Board the power to make changes that are needed to prepare for present and future communications technologies that will affect emergency management communications. A unifying place is created to discuss communications problems. This will also help to streamline the process for allocating the bandwidth across the state.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** Senator Aaron Reardon, prime sponsor (pro); Stuart McKee, Department of Information Services (pro); Glen Woodbury, Military Department (pro); Larry Erickson, Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (pro); Ronal Serpas, Washington State Patrol (pro).