

SENATE BILL REPORT

EHB 2667

As of February 19, 2010

Title: An act relating to communications during a forest fire response.

Brief Description: Concerning communications during a forest fire response.

Sponsors: Representatives Chandler, Simpson, Kelley and Warnick.

Brief History: Passed House: 2/10/10, 96-0.

Committee Activity: Natural Resources, Ocean & Recreation: 2/18/10.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES, OCEAN & RECREATION

Staff: Sherry McNamara (786-7402)

Background: The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is responsible for forest fire prevention and response on both state-owned and private forest land in Washington. DNR is authorized to adopt rules for forest fire prevention, control, and suppression.

The Governor appointed, nine member Fire Protection Policy Board (Policy Board) is responsible for establishing a comprehensive state policy regarding fire protection services, including adopting the state fire protection master plan. The Policy Board also advises the Chief of the Washington State Patrol and the state Fire Marshal on matters pertaining to fire protection. The Policy Board is composed of representatives of the fire chiefs, insurance industry, cities and towns, counties, career firefighters, volunteer firefighters, fire commissioners, DNR, and the state association of fire marshals.

The Policy Board approves regional fire service plans developed by regional fire defense boards. These service plans include requirements for fire agencies to respond across jurisdictional boundaries. The regional fire defense boards consist of two members from each county in the region and a representative from each DNR region.

In 2003 the Legislature created the State Interoperability Executive Committee (SIEC) to develop polices and make recommendations to the Information Services Board regarding technical standards for state radio communications systems, including emergency communications systems. The SEIC works to ensure that emergency responders can communicate across all levels of government and across all jurisdictions.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Summary of Bill: Any rules adopted by DNR for forest fire suppression must include a fire mobilization radio frequency. This frequency must be available during the initial response to any forest fire that crosses jurisdictional lines so that all responders have access to communications during the response. Different initial response frequencies may be identified and used as appropriate in different geographic response areas.

Each regional fire district service plan must provide a mechanism for a dedicated fire mobilization radio frequency. This frequency must be available to all responders when any forest fire crosses jurisdictional lines. The regional fire service plan must be approved by the Policy Board before implementation.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The initial response to a forest fire is critical when you have responders from different jurisdictions that need to communicate with each other. This bill will help by requiring an established radio frequency to be known in advance of the incident.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Joseph Shramek, DNR.