

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1126

As Reported by House Committee On:
Public Safety

Title: An act relating to state fire service mobilization.

Brief Description: Concerning state fire service mobilization.

Sponsors: Representatives Goodman, Klippert, Hurst, Van De Wege, Warnick, Ryu and Smith.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Public Safety: 1/24/13, 1/30/13 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Redefines and expands the definition and role of mobilization to include "all risk resources" regularly provided by firefighting authorities that are needed to respond to various incidents, including: wildland fires, earthquakes, floods, contagious diseases, and other technical rescues.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Goodman, Chair; Roberts, Vice Chair; Klippert, Ranking Minority Member; Hayes, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Appleton, Holy, Hope, Moscoso, Pettigrew, Ross and Takko.

Staff: Yvonne Walker (786-7841).

Background:

The State Fire Marshal serves as the state fire resources coordinator when a Washington fire services mobilization plan is mobilized.

State fire mobilization plans are needed:

- because of the possibility of the occurrence of disastrous fires or other disasters of unprecedented size and destructiveness;

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- to insure that the state is adequately prepared to respond to such a fire or disaster;
- to provide for redistribution of personnel, equipment, and other logistical resources from around the state when a wildland fire or other emergency exceeds the firefighting capacity of local jurisdictions;
- to establish a mechanism and a procedure to provide for reimbursement to state agencies and local agencies that respond to help others in time of need or to a host fire district that experiences expenses beyond their allocated available resources in that district; and
- to protect the public peace, health, safety, lives, and property of the people of Washington.

A fire service "mobilization" is defined as those resources requested beyond those available through existing agreements and when available, those resources are sent in response to an emergency or disaster situation that has exceeded the capabilities of available local resources. During a large scale emergency, mobilization includes the redistribution of regional or statewide firefighting resources to either direct emergency incident assignments or to assignments in communities where firefighting resources are needed.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The role of a fire mobilization is expanded. A "mobilization" is redefined and expanded to include "all risk resources" regularly provided by fire departments, fire districts, and regional fire protection authorities.

"All risk resources" includes those resources, regularly provided by fire departments and other entities that are required to respond to incidents, including: wildland fires, earthquakes, floods, contagious diseases, and other technical rescues that have aspects of saving life or property and employ the use of tools and skills that exceed those normally reserved for firefighting and medical emergency. These disciplines include: rope rescue, swift water rescue, confined space rescue, ski rescue, cave rescue, trench or excavation rescue, and building collapse rescue.

Nonhost fire protection authorities are eligible for reimbursement for expenses incurred while providing all risk resources during a mobilization provided the mobilization meets requirements identified in the Washington State Fire Service Mobilization plan. The maximum amount that can be spent on all risk disasters is limited to \$500,000 of the total amount that is appropriated for state mobilizations.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

A provision is added that limits the amount to be spent on all risk disasters to \$500,000 of the total amount appropriated for mobilizations.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The intent of this bill is to return mobilization back to its intended purpose which is to make it available for all major risks in Washington. The reason a fire service mobilization plan is implemented is to provide personnel, equipment and other logistical resources from around the state when an emergency exceeds the capacity of local jurisdictions. The types of emergencies that require state mobilization include: wildlife, earthquakes, floods, and other disasters that local communities are unable to handle on their own.

(Information only) Unfortunately, several years ago an attorney general's interpretation of state law stated that fire mobilizations should be limited to only incidents directly involving fire. This defeats the purpose of state fire service mobilizations and eliminates coordinated responses for such disasters. This bill will codify existing practices of state mobilizations.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Goodman, prime sponsor; and Al Church, Washington Fire Chiefs.

(Information only) Rob Huss, Washington State Patrol.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.