

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1127

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Public Safety

**Title:** An act relating to prefire mitigation.

**Brief Description:** Developing prefire mitigation plans.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Klippert, Goodman, Warnick, Kristiansen, Van De Wege and Ryu.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

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

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Requires the Director of Fire Protection to develop a plan for prefire mitigation by adopting by rule the principles of the Ready, Set, Go! Program.
- Establishes a Wildfire Prevention Account in the custody of the State Treasurer to be used for prefire mitigation education efforts.

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### 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 Office of the State Fire Marshal is a bureau, within the Washington State Patrol, and it provides various services to fire districts, government agencies, and the public. Examples of these services include: coordination of the state fire service resources for mobilization during large scale fires and disasters, fire incident reporting and data collection, fire code review and adoption, and construction plan reviews for fire sprinkler and alarm systems. The Office of the State Fire Marshal also regulates the fireworks and sprinkler industries. In

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addition, the Office of the State Fire Marshal provides instructional programs and high-risk fire training to fire departments and fire protection districts, hazardous materials training, and fire prevention education.

Ready, Set, Go! Program. The Ready, Set, Go! Program is a new approach to packaging existing public education programs to gain active public involvement toward reducing life and property loss and escalating costs associated with wildland fires. The tool is used by fire departments to reach out to residents in wildland urban areas to better enable them to prepare before a wildfire strikes. It is a collaborative process that helps in improving coordination and communication between emergency response agencies and the community.

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### **Summary of Substitute Bill:**

The Legislature finds that wildfire occurrence, fire intensity, and values at risk have continued to increase across the state in recent years. The Legislature intends to limit the scope of future wildfires by establishing a statewide prefire mitigation plan to be overseen by the Office of the State Fire Marshal.

The State Fire Marshal, also known as the Director of Fire Protection (Director), must develop a plan for prefire mitigation by adopting rules based on the principles of the Ready, Set, Go! Program developed by the International Association of Fire Chiefs. The rules must require coordination with local fire departments to develop individualized communitywide protection plans that include public education such as Firewise, partnership building, and personal wildfire action plans in the event of a wildfire. The Director must also work with the State Building Code Council to identify potential barriers and encourage adoption of the International Wildland Urban Interface Code.

"Firewise" means the Firewise Communities Program developed by the National Fire Protection Association, which encourages local solutions for wildfire safety by involving homeowners, community leaders, planners, developers, firefighters, and others in the effort to protect people and property from wildfire risks.

A Wildfire Prevention Account (Account) is created in the custody of the State Treasurer. The Account will consist of funds from:

- all bequests, fees, gifts, emoluments, or donations;
- five percent of all money received by the state from taxes on fire insurance premiums; and
- interest on the investments on the Account.

Only the Director or the Director's designee may authorize expenditures from the Account and the funds may only be used for prefire mitigation efforts.

### **Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

A technical amendment is made to reference the newly created Wildfire Prevention Account in the State Treasurer's statute for purposes of being able to distribute funds for prefire mitigation efforts.

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**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) Wildland fires have continued to increase in Washington in recent years. The 2012 wildland fires were the worst in history costing over \$70 million in firefighting costs to the State of Washington, destroying over 350,000 acres of land and 62 homes, and also causing some major health issues.

The purpose of this bill is to prevent fires from happening through prefire mitigation. It will task the State Fire Marshal with adopting a nationally recognized fire mitigation program called the Ready, Set, Go! Program. This provides coordination and implementation for local jurisdictions, establishes operational concepts, and identifies tasks required to carry out a comprehensive wildfire management program. This is a three-tier program that involves communities and citizens, local fire departments and local resources, and the state fire mobilization.

The bill would require the development of individualized community-wide protection plans that include public education. Lastly, the bill allows 5 percent of the unallocated portion of the already existing fire insurance premiums tax to be used for prefire mitigation planning.

(With concerns) As this bill is being considered it is recommended to look at how it interfaces with efforts that are going on with the Department of Natural Resource's prevention and suppression programs. The state needs some type of proactive approach to dealing with wildfires, but it should coordinate with the efforts of other agencies.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Representative Klippert, prime sponsor; Al Church, Washington Fire Chiefs; and Bill Robinson, The Nature Conservatory.

(With concerns) Miguel Perez-Gibson, Washington Environmental Council.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.