

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1382

As Reported by House Committee On:
Local Government

Title: An act relating to delivery of basic firefighter training and testing.

Brief Description: Addressing the delivery of basic firefighter training and testing.

Sponsors: Representatives Griffey, Blake, Lytton and G. Hunt.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Local Government: 2/3/15, 2/5/15 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Obligates the Director of Fire Protection to develop and adopt a plan for the Washington State Patrol's Fire Training Academy (Academy) to deliver basic firefighter training and testing to all public firefighting agencies in the state.
- Grants firefighting agencies the option of seeking reimbursement for their firefighter training expenses in lieu of obtaining training from the Academy.
- Establishes an order of priority for the type of firefighting agencies that receive the training, testing, or reimbursements, with volunteer fire departments being the first priority.
- Makes, subject to administrative approval, the facilities and programs of the Academy available at no cost to fire service youth programs.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Takko, Chair; Gregerson, Vice Chair; Taylor, Ranking Minority Member; Griffey, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Fitzgibbon, McBride, McCaslin, Peterson and Pike.

Staff: Ethan Moreno (786-7386).

Background:

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.

Washington's Director of Fire Protection, a position also referred to as the Washington State Fire Marshal (Fire Marshal), is charged with providing training, certification, and coordination duties related to protecting life, property, and the environment from fire. The Fire Marshal is appointed by the Chief of the Washington State Patrol (WSP), and the Fire Marshal's office operates as a bureau within the WSP. Bureau staff is located in its Olympia headquarters office, at the WSP Fire Training Academy (Academy) in North Bend, and in eight field offices around the state.

Among other duties established in statute, the Fire Marshal must develop and adopt a plan with a goal of providing Fire Fighter I and wildland training to all firefighters in the state. The term "Fire Fighter I" is used to designate a specific level of training, knowledge, and skills that relate to functioning safely and effectively as an integral member of a firefighting team. "Wildland training" refers to a type of training that prepares firefighters for fighting wildfires. Wildland training is encompassed within firefighter training provided at the Academy.

In accordance with statutory provisions, the Fire Marshal reimburses firefighting entities for the costs incurred by these entities in providing their own training to firefighters. For example, wildland training reimbursement must be provided by the WSP to fire protection districts (fire districts) and city fire departments (fire departments) if certain requirements are met. Additionally, the training plan of the Fire Marshal must include a reimbursement for fire districts and fire departments of not less than \$3 per hour of Fire Fighter I or wildland training. The reimbursements that the WSP can provide per firefighter for Fire Fighter I or wildland training may not exceed 200 hours.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The Director of Fire Protection (Fire Marshal), rather than developing and adopting a plan with a goal of providing Fire Fighter I and wildland training to all firefighters in the state, must develop and adopt a plan for the WSP Fire Training Academy (Academy) to deliver basic firefighter training and testing to all city fire departments (fire departments), fire protection districts (fire districts), regional fire protection service authorities (RFAs), and other public fire agencies in the state. The plan must specify that the delivery of training and testing services will be provided to recipients in the following order of priority:

- volunteer departments;
- combination departments; and
- fire agencies that employ only career firefighters and fire officers.

The plan must also specify that the delivery of training and testing services will be provided by personnel of the Academy, either at the Academy's facilities in North Bend or regionally at local fire agencies.

In lieu of receiving training and testing services from the Academy, city fire departments, fire districts, RFAs, and other public fire agencies in the state may seek reimbursement for their Firefighter I training expenses. The amount of reimbursement must be calculated on a per capita basis using a formula that considers, in part, the three-year statewide firefighter per

capita average for the regional direct delivery of training by the Academy. Prior to the implementation of these formula-based reimbursement provisions, the amount of reimbursement for city fire departments, fire districts, RFAs, and other public fire agencies must not be less than \$3 for every one hour of provided Firefighter I training, and may not exceed 200 hours.

Subject to approval by the Fire Marshal, and in accordance with the firefighter training and testing plan, Academy facilities and programs must be made available at no cost to fire service youth programs. The goal of making these facilities and programs available is to increase enrollment of volunteer firefighters, and to improve gender, cultural, and ethnic diversity within the fire service.

Definitions related to the development and adoption of a firefighter training and testing plan by the Fire Marshal are established as follows:

- "Basic firefighter training and testing" means training and testing for firefighters that is up to and includes the requirements of Firefighter I, as identified by the National Fire Protection Association Standard 1001.
- "Combination department" means a fire department with emergency service personnel comprising less than 85 percent of either volunteer or career membership.
- "Delivery of training" includes all resources, personnel, and equipment necessary to deliver training at the Academy or regionally at local fire agencies.
- "Volunteer department" means a fire department with volunteer emergency service personnel comprising 85 percent or greater of its department membership.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill makes the following changes to the original bill:

- establishes that the amount of reimbursement provided to fire agencies for conducting their own Firefighter I training will be calculated on a per capita basis only, rather than on an individual or per capita basis;
- specifies that the per capita reimbursement amount is based upon cost considerations involving the "regional direct delivery" of training rather than "regional delivery" of training;
- makes related terminology changes in the reimbursement formula provisions;
- specifies that, prior to implementation of the reimbursement provisions established in the underlying bill, the reimbursement amount for city fire departments, fire protection districts, regional fire protection service authorities, and other public fire agencies must be not less than \$3 for every one hour of Firefighter I training, and may not exceed 200 hours; and
- makes numerous technical changes, including changing references from "fire districts" to "fire protection districts," changing references from "regional fire authorities" to "regional fire protection service authorities," changing references from "municipal fire agencies" to "public fire agencies," and consolidating definitions established in the underlying bill into a single subsection.

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) This bill address past practices and prioritizes small departments. This is a good bill that gives the Director of Fire Protection (Fire Marshal) more flexibility and accountability. The Washington State Patrol supports the bill and the concept of regional firefighter training, and recommends an amendment with small changes to the underlying bill.

This is an extremely important bill for volunteer firefighters. Volunteers are willing to volunteer their services, but they need the support of others to do so. This bill will address technical impediments by clarifying what services the Fire Marshal delivers. This bill removes any questions about how the services are delivered. This bill is easy; it has no fiscal impact, but clarifies how training allocations are used. This bill will help to provide training and support that is needed, and is supported by Washington fire commissioners.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Griffey, prime sponsor; Melissa VanGorkom, Washington State Patrol Office of the State Fire Marshal; TJ Nedrow, Washington State Firefighters Association; and Chuck Duffy, Washington State Patrol, Fire Protection Bureau.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.