
**Agriculture & Natural Resources
Committee**

HB 2579

Brief Description: Concerning prefire mitigation.

Sponsors: Representatives Griffey, Goodman, Orwall, Dent, Wilson, Van De Wege and McBride.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the State Fire Marshal to develop a statewide prefire mitigation plan by adopting in rule the principles and tenets of a nationally recognized preparedness plan.
- Creates the Wildfire Prevention Account as a nonappropriated account in the state Treasury.

Hearing Date: 1/26/16

Staff: Rebecca Lewis (786-7339).

Background:

State Fire Marshal.

The State Fire Marshal's office is part of the Washington State Patrol, and is responsible for a number of fire preparedness and prevention tasks including but not limited to: fire inspections; construction plan review; training of Washington State's Fire Service; and the certification of fire service members. The State Fire Marshal's office also coordinates fire service resources during large fires and disasters in accordance with the State Fire Resource Mobilization Plan (Mobilization Plan). The Mobilization Plan is an "all risk" plan, meaning it is used to provide fire services during fire, or other disaster or emergency where fire services are needed for the protection of life or property. The most recent revision was in April of 2014.

International Wildland Urban Interface Code.

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.

The International Wildland Urban Interface Code (IWUIC) is a model code developed and published by the International Code Council, Inc. (ICC). The ICC is a nonprofit organization that develops and publishes model codes for building, construction, and design standards, and develops and publishes updates to codes on a three-year cycle. The IWUIC establishes minimum regulations for land use and construction in designated wildland-urban interface areas in order to mitigate wildfire hazards.

As defined in the IWUIC, wildland-urban interface areas are the geographical area where structures and other human development exists near or intermingles with an unoccupied or undeveloped area susceptible to forest, brush, or other wildland fires. Wildland-urban interface areas can exist in areas commonly understood as rural, urban, and suburban.

State Building Code Council.

The State Building Code Council (Council) provides analysis and advice to the Legislature and the Office of the Governor on state building code issues and adopts rules that implement and incorporate the state's performance standards. Updates to the state building code and performance standards are made on a three-year cycle, and are codified in the Washington Administrative Code. In 2012 the Council adopted the *2012 International Wildland Urban Interface Code* as an optional code that local jurisdictions may adopt and enforce.

Ready, Set, Go Program.

The Ready, Set, Go program (Ready, Set, Go) is administered by the International Associations of Fire Chiefs. Ready, Set, Go emphasizes preparedness and situational awareness before and during a wildfire, and is designed to help local fire departments teach individuals who live in high-risk wildfire areas how to best prepare for wildfire threats. The goals of Ready, Set, Go are to encourage communities, especially those located in or near a wildland-urban interface area, to plan ahead and take steps to reduce potential damage before and during a wildfire incident.

Firewise Communities.

The Firewise Communities Program (Firewise) is a public education program focused on wildfire preparedness. Firewise is a project of the National Fire Protection Association, co-sponsored by the United States Forest Service, Department of the Interior, and National Association of State Foresters. Firewise emphasizes collaboration between individuals, neighborhoods, and local governments to reduce the risk of wildfire in areas susceptible to such disasters.

In order to be recognized as a Firewise community, a city, town, or neighborhood in an area susceptible to brush, grass, or forest fire must:

- obtain a wildfire risk assessment in writing from the state forest agency or a fire department;
- form a board or committee and create an action plan based on the risk assessment
- conduct a Firewise Day event;
- invest at least \$2 per capita per year in Firewise actions which include volunteer hours, loaned equipment, or hired contractors for clean-up work as well as cash spent; and
- complete an application and submit it to the state Firewise liason.

Communities must renew their status each year.

Summary of Bill:

The State Fire Marshal must develop a statewide prefire mitigation plan (statewide plan) by adopting in rule principles and tenets of a nationally recognized plan, such as Ready, Set, Go. The rules must require the development of individualized, community-wide protection plans in coordination with local fire departments. Community-wide protection plans must include public education, such as Firewise, partnership building, and personal wildfire action plans.

The Wildfire Prevention Account (Account) is created as a nonappropriated account in the state Treasury, and consists of funds from a variety of sources including: bequests, gifts, fees, emoluments, or donations given or paid into the account; 5 percent of state tax revenue from fire insurance premiums; and interest on the investments of the account.

The Office of the State Fire Marshal must identify priority interface zones and develop a grant program to assist local jurisdictions to voluntarily adopt the IWUIC. Only the state Fire Marshal, or their designee, may authorize expenditures from the Account. Expenditures from the Account may only be used for prefire mitigation efforts in accordance with the statewide plan.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Preliminary fiscal note available.

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