

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5455

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: Senate Committee on Government Operations & Security (originally sponsored by Senators Rivers, Parlette, Hatfield and Hobbs).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Local Government: 3/12/15, 3/19/15 [DPA].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill
(As Amended by Committee)**

- 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 availability and 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: Do pass as amended. 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).

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.

Background:

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.

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 WSP can provide per firefighter for Fire Fighter I or wildland training may not exceed 200 hours.

Summary of Amended Bill:

The Director of Fire Protection (Fire Marshal) must develop and adopt a plan for the Washington State Patrol 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, Washington, or regionally at local fire agencies.

In lieu of receiving training and testing services from the Academy, fire departments, fire districts, RFAs, and other public fire agencies in the state may seek reimbursement for their Fire Fighter 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 fire departments, fire districts, RFAs, and other public fire agencies must not be less than \$3 for every hour of provided Fire Fighter I training, and may not exceed 200 hours per firefighter.

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 Fire Fighter 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.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill:

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

- adds a provision specifying that, prior to implementation of the reimbursement provisions proposed in the underlying bill, the reimbursement amount for fire departments, fire 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 per firefighter; 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," consolidating definitions established in the underlying bill into a single subsection, and re-wording reimbursement formula provisions.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended 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 is an extremely important bill for volunteer firefighters, and will deliver training to them that today is not always available. Volunteers have no control over the delivery of training, but this bill will help volunteers to better provide emergency services. The bill will also help to better prioritize training. This bill has no fiscal impact, but will clarify how current allocations are made. The bill provides another tool for delivering firefighter training services.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: TJ Nedrow, Washington State Firefighters Association; and Ryan Spiller, Washington Fire Commissioners Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.