

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5455

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Government Operations & Security, February 10, 2015

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

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

Sponsors: Senators Rivers, Parlette, Hatfield and Hobbs.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Security: 2/03/15, 2/10/15 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & SECURITY

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5455 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Roach, Chair; Benton, Vice Chair; Pearson, Vice Chair; Liias, Ranking Minority Member; Habib and McCoy.

Staff: Samuel Brown (786-7470)

Background: The Office of the State Fire Marshal (Marshal) sits within the Washington State Patrol, providing 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 Marshal also regulates the fireworks and sprinkler industries, and provides instructional programs and high-risk fire training to fire departments and fire protection districts, hazardous materials training, and fire prevention education.

The Washington State Fire Training Academy (FTA), operated by the Marshal, sits on 51.3 acres of land east of North Bend. The FTA provides training for firefighters and public safety officials as well as private brigades and the maritime industry. The FTA also provides training for hazardous spill cleanup. The facility consists of an administrative building, three classrooms, dormitories, and support facilities.

National Fire Protection Association Standard 1001, known as Firefighter I, identifies the minimum job performance requirements for both career and volunteer firefighters to address

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structural fires. The Marshal must develop and adopt a plan for providing Firefighter I and wildland training to all firefighters in the state. The plan does not need to provide reimbursement for any fire agencies independently obtaining Firefighter I training.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Substitute): The Marshal must provide a plan for the FTA to deliver basic firefighter training and testing, up to and including the Firefighter I standard, for all city fire departments, fire districts, regional fire authorities, and other municipal fire agencies. This training must be provided at the FTA or regionally at local fire agencies. Fire agencies may seek reimbursement for Firefighter I training obtained from sources other than the Marshal. Reimbursement to fire agencies conducting Firefighter I training independently is calculated on a per-capita basis in an amount equal to the three-year statewide average for the cost of providing regional direct Firefighter I training.

The Marshal must provide either direct Firefighter I training or reimbursement of training expenses in the following order of priority:

1. to volunteer fire departments, defined as fire departments where 85 percent or more of department members are volunteers;
2. to combination fire departments, defined as fire departments where less than 85 percent of department members are either volunteers or career firefighters; and
3. to fire agencies using exclusively career firefighters and fire officers.

FTA facilities and programs must be made available at no cost to fire service youth programs, dependent on the Marshal's approval.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & SECURITY COMMITTEE (Recommended Substitute): The bill is clarified to state that reimbursement to fire agencies conducting Firefighter I training independently is calculated on a per-capita basis in an amount equal to the three-year statewide average for the cost of providing regional direct Firefighter I training.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill: PRO: Fires have been put at the forefront with some of the recent emergencies over the last few summers. We have to create an environment and a plan to ensure a ready supply of firefighters to keep us safe. This bill provides a mechanism for a regionalized form of training at districts or regional training facilities. The current reimbursement mechanism is cumbersome for some districts. This bill will have no fiscal impact to the state. Fire districts will be able to save money on travel expenses by not having to go to North Bend.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Rivers, prime sponsor; Roger Ferris, WA Fire Commissioners Assn.; Melissa Van Gorkom, WA State Patrol Fire Marshal's Office.