
Public Safety Committee

HB 1736

Brief Description: Concerning the establishment of a premobilization assistance program to assist local fire suppression entities on the initial attack of a wildland fire.

Sponsors: Representatives Dye, Goodman, Dent, Koster, Griffey, Blake, Springer, Orwall, Kretz, Tharinger and Tarleton.

<p style="text-align: center;">Brief Summary of Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Directs the State Fire Marshal to establish a premobilization assistance program designed to assist local fire suppression entities with obtaining aircraft services to prevent escalation of wildland fires.

Hearing Date: 2/13/17

Staff: Omeara Harrington (786-7136).

Background:

The Chief of the Washington State Patrol (WSP) has the authority to mobilize jurisdictions under the Washington State Fire Services Mobilization Plan. The State Fire Marshal is the Director of Fire Protection for the WSP and serves as the state fire resources coordinator when the Washington State Fire Services Mobilization Plan is mobilized.

A state fire resources mobilization is warranted when a local disaster necessitates resources beyond those available through existing agreements. During a large-scale emergency, mobilization includes the redistribution of regional or statewide firefighting resources to either direct emergency incident assignments or to assignments in communities where firefighting resources are needed. From the time a state mobilization is declared, all fire protection authorities providing resources in response to the mobilization declaration are eligible for expense reimbursement. State and local agencies that participate in a mobilization generally receive reimbursement through the state's Disaster Response Account.

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.

As the Director of Fire Protection, the State Fire Marshal advises the Chief of the WSP regarding refinement and maintenance of the Washington State Fire Services Mobilization Plan, including the procedures to be used during fire and other emergencies for coordinating local, regional, and state fire jurisdiction resources. The State Fire Marshal is also responsible for approving regional fire service plans developed by regional defense board, to provide for organized fire agency response across municipal, county, or regional boundaries.

Summary of Bill:

The State Fire Marshal must establish and manage a premobilization assistance program designed to provide financial assistance to local fire suppression entities for the cost of flying or contracting for aircraft services. Aircraft services may be for the initial attack of wildland fires or for preventing a wildland fire from escalating to a point in which mobilization is needed. A "local fire suppression entity" is defined as a city or county fire department or district that is responsible for suppression of wildland fires within its jurisdiction, that has access to state mobilization, and that has been issued a fire department identification number by the WSP Fire Marshal's office.

A local fire suppression entity may request reimbursement from the premobilization assistance program after deployment of aircraft for an initial attack during a wildfire incident within the response area of the entity. The entity must include invoices documenting incurred expenses with the request.

Initially, the State Fire Marshal may provide up to \$10,000 per wildfire incident. If the cost exceeds \$10,000, the State Fire Marshal may approve up to an additional \$10,000 of funding. Total awards from the premobilization assistance program may not exceed \$20,000 per wildfire incident. The funds must be distributed to the requesting entity within 30 days of the request.

The State Fire Marshal is not required to provide funding for premobilization assistance beyond the amount specifically appropriated for the program, and must notify local fire suppression entities when funding for the program is close to depletion.

A report detailing the use of the premobilization assistance program must be submitted to the appropriate committees of the Legislature by December 1, 2023. The report must include:

- the number of districts that requested program resources;
- which districts requested resources from the program and for which incidents; and
- a description of each incident for which premobilization assistance program resources were requested, including: ignition date and location; acreage burned; types of resources deployed; and a timeline of key events.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 10, 2017.

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