

HOUSE BILL REPORT

EHB 2667

As Passed House:
February 10, 2010

Title: An act relating to communications during a forest fire response.

Brief Description: Concerning communications during a forest fire response.

Sponsors: Representatives Chandler, Simpson, Kelley and Warnick.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture & Natural Resources: 1/21/10 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/10/10, 96-0.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Bill

- Requires a dedicated radio frequency for fire mobilization during response to a forest fire that crosses jurisdictional boundaries.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Blake, Chair; Ormsby, Vice Chair; Chandler, Ranking Minority Member; Smith, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Jacks, Kretz, Lias, McCoy, Nelson, Pearson, Rolfes and Van De Wege.

Staff: Leslie Ryan-Connelly (786-7166).

Background:

Regional fire defense boards develop regional fire service plans that include requirements for fire agencies to respond across jurisdictional boundaries. The regional fire service plans must be consistent with other approved emergency management plans. Regional boards consist of representatives from the counties within the region and the Department of Natural Resources.

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.

Regional fire service plans must be approved by the State Fire Protection Policy Board (Policy Board). The Policy Board consists of nine members appointed by the Governor. The Policy Board is responsible for developing comprehensive state policy regarding fire protection services including adopting the state fire protection master plan and advising the Chief of the Washington State Patrol and the State Fire Marshal.

The Department of Natural Resources (Department) is in direct charge of the forest fire service of the state. The Department adopts rules for forest fire prevention, control and suppression.

The state Interoperability Executive Committee was formed in 2003 by the Legislature to develop policies and make recommendations to the Information Services Board regarding technical standards for state radio communications systems, including emergency communications systems. The interoperability of communication systems ensures that all emergency responders can communicate with each other across all levels of government and across all jurisdictions.

Summary of Engrossed Bill:

The Department of Natural Resources must adopt rules that provide for dedicated radio frequencies or other interoperability radio frequencies, for fire mobilization that are available to all responders when the forest fire crosses jurisdictional lines.

Regional fire service plans developed by regional fire defense boards must provide for dedicated radio frequencies, or other interoperability radio frequencies, for fire mobilization that are available to all responders when the forest fire crosses jurisdictional lines.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 18, 2010.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Many times responders do not have direct communication during fire response. Statewide fire mobilization is organized by the State Patrol. Incident commanders have to get to high ground to call the State Fire Marshal. The issue is not from one truck to another. Different agencies operate on different communication systems. This bill seeks to create a better communication system. It is not requiring a new technology. It will require that a certain radio channel will be used during fire response for all the traffic for that fire. Forest fire fighting operations have good processes for those agencies that regularly participate. This bill will identify frequencies in advance in the plans and will help those agencies who don't regularly respond to fires.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Chandler, prime sponsor; and Joe Shramek, Department of Natural Resources.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.