

VETO MESSAGE ON SB 6023

April 2, 1994

To the Honorable President and Members,
The Senate of the State of Washington
Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am returning herewith, without my approval, Senate Bill No. 6023 entitled:

"AN ACT Relating to emergency management;"

This legislation would transfer the emergency management function from the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development to the Military Department.

The state role in emergency management is an extremely important one. Under state law, local governments have prime responsibility for protecting the public's health and safety. The state's role is to assist local governments in planning, for responding to, and recovering from emergencies and disasters of all kinds. As governor, I have responsibility for public health and safety statewide, and I take this responsibility seriously. Actions that affect the state's capacity to plan for and respond to emergencies are of critical importance to me.

I believe that a review of how to best organize the state's ability to plan for and respond to emergencies and other public safety needs is both reasonable and appropriate. The Department of Community Development was given responsibility for emergency management in 1986 because of the need to better coordinate state emergency management activities with local governments and with other agencies and to provide a more effective emergency planning, response, and recovery capability for the state in the event of an emergency.

While the Military Department is both capable and responsive, it is not clear that simply transferring emergency management responsibilities from the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development, in and of itself, will significantly improve the ability of the state to plan or respond to emergencies.

Effective emergency management requires extensive state and local planning. It involves the highest degree of readiness and effectiveness when an emergency occurs, backing up local response with state resources and personnel if needed. It involves the ability to quickly identify local losses and needs, to fund recovery as rapidly as possible and to cover these costs until federal reimbursement arrives. All of these activities require close coordination between state and local emergency managers and between many state agencies.

Rather than transferring the existing division from one agency to another, the state should review all of these issues and other public safety concerns as well to assure that the state has the best capacity to respond to emergencies and the strongest ability to protect the public safety.

For these reasons, I have vetoed Senate Bill No. 6023 in its entirety.

Respectfully submitted,
Mike Lowry
Governor

