

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2550

As Reported by House Committee On:
Public Safety & Emergency Preparedness

Title: An act relating to establishing standards for emergency preparedness kits.

Brief Description: Establishing standards for emergency preparedness kits.

Sponsors: Representatives Goodman, Lantz, Pearson, O'Brien, VanDeWege, Morrell and Simpson.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Public Safety & Emergency Preparedness: 1/16/08 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Department of General Administration to establish state standards for the purchasing and procurement of emergency preparedness kits.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY & EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives O'Brien, Chair; Hurst, Vice Chair; Pearson, Ranking Minority Member; Ross, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Ahern, Goodman and Kirby.

Staff: Yvonne Walker (786-7841).

Background:

An emergency preparedness kit is known as a kit that is designed to provide essential items that a person will need during or after a disaster. Generally, a kit is intended for storage at home, and to be used at home or in a place where someone may go if local authorities ask for an evacuation. Although the contents of an emergency preparedness kit can vary depending on where it is produced or purchased, a typical kit may include such items as: a limited amount of food and water, a first-aid kit, a flashlight, a radio, medications, and other such items as may be necessary to get a person through an emergency situation. A person can purchase an emergency preparedness kit from various retailers, nonprofit organizations, over

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the Internet, or may even choose to prepare his or her own individual emergency preparedness kit to accommodate personal needs.

Local and state agencies may procure emergency preparedness kits from the Central Stores of the Department of General Administration (GA).

Summary of Bill:

The GA is required to establish purchasing and procurement policies and safety standards for emergency preparedness kits that are purchased or acquired by a state or local agency. In developing these policies, the GA must consult with the Emergency Management Division of the Military Department and a minimum of two private sector vendors that supply emergency preparedness kits.

At a minimum, the policies and safety standards for the emergency preparedness kits must include the following:

- how expiration dates are to be displayed on each kit representing the shelf life of each kit and the kit's contents;
- how each kit, pouch, or container containing the basic essentials are in compliance with the standards established by the Federal Environmental Protection Agency;
- how each kit procured meets or exceeds any federal regulations or procurement standards governing emergency preparedness kits purchased at the federal level; and
- what state agency should have oversight responsibility for selecting the vendor from whom a state or local agency may acquire emergency preparedness kits and ensuring that those kits meet established state safety standards.

An "emergency preparedness kit" is defined as a supply of basic essentials for one person that includes, but is not limited to, water, food, a first-aid kit, and special items for infants and elder care.

The GA is required to submit a report to the Legislature by December 1, 2008. The report must include the established emergency preparedness kit safety standards and a list of those state agencies that currently purchase or acquire emergency preparedness kits for public distribution.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) There is a concern to clean up the emergency preparedness kit industry. Over the years it has been discovered that many emergency kits that are prepared are not safe. Many of the kits that were sold in the market have contained harmful items such as mercury and lead, toothpaste that has been recalled, and even light sticks purchased in China that have malfunctioned. We need to ensure that kits are safe and reliable, otherwise people who purchase these kits can get sick. The bill requires the GA to study and recommend safety standards and to bring those proposed standards back before the Legislature in a year.

The safety kit industry would like to police their own industry by making sure the kits are safe and helpful to the general public.

(Neutral with concerns) The Military Department would like to assist in this issue surrounding emergency preparedness kits, but it should be noted that they can only serve in an advisory capacity as they do not have the expertise in establishing standards for the industry. The Military Department's website as well as other educational programs are available that can provide the general public with a list of suggested items that should be included as part of a personal emergency preparedness kit. Each kit should be created to suit one's individual needs.

The bill as drafted seems to target procurement standards. Currently, state and local governments can purchase emergency kits through the Central Stores of the GA. The GA procures their kits from the Red Cross which includes a three-day supply of basic essentials for one adult person. It was felt that the bill should be amended so that references to local government agencies are deleted and that the procurement standards only pertain to state government agencies at this time.

Currently, there are no federal standards that dictate what should go into a kit and how expiration dates should be displayed.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Goodman, prime sponsor; and Jeff Guite and Mark Gjurask, American Preparedness.

(Neutral with concerns) Jim Mullen, Washington Military Department; Christine Warnock, Washington Department of General Administration; and Tammy Fellin, Association of Washington Cities.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.