
Commerce & Labor Committee

HB 1756

Brief Description: Establishing objectives for certain fire department services.

Sponsors: Representatives P. Sullivan, B. Sullivan, Miloscia, Simpson, Nixon, Curtis, Conway and Wood.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires substantially career fire departments to maintain written policies on their services, turnout times, response times, and other performance objectives.
- Requires substantially career fire departments to make annual evaluations of and issue annual reports on their services and performance objectives.

Hearing Date: 2/16/05

Staff: Jill Reinmuth (786-7134).

Background:

The Department of Labor and Industries (Department) administers and enforces the Washington Industrial Safety and Health Act (WISHA). Under WISHA, the Department must adopt rules governing safety and health standards for most workplaces. These standards include general standards that apply to most industries, as well as additional specific standards for certain industries.

The specific standards for fire fighting apply to all activities related to providing fire protection services. There are also specific standards applicable to fire suppression equipment, wildland fire fighting, and industrial fire brigades. These standards make reference to some National Fire Protection Association standards, but not those that address the organization or deployment of fire departments.

Summary of Bill:

The intent of the Legislature is to set standards for addressing the occupational safety and health of substantially career fire department employees, and to specify performance measures applicable to response time objectives. These performance measures are comparable to research relating to substantially career fire department organization and deployment. It is not the intent of the Legislature to modify or limit the Department of Labor and Industries' authority to adopt rules

under the Washington Industrial Safety and Health Act that are applicable to fire departments or that otherwise address the occupational safety and health of firefighters.

Substantially career fire departments must maintain written policies specifying fire department services, organizational structure, expected number of employees, and functions. In addition, they must maintain written policies specifying turnout time, response time, and performance objectives. Finally, they must make annual evaluations of their levels of service, turnout times, and response times. Beginning in 2007, they must also issue annual reports that specify circumstances in which objectives are not being met, and address the steps necessary to achieve compliance.

Definitions are added for multiple terms, including "advanced life support," "aircraft rescue and fire fighting," "brain death," "fire suppression," "first responder," "flash-over," "marine rescue and fire fighting," "response time," "special operations," and "turnout time."

Rules Authority: The bill does not address the rule making authority of an agency.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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