

FINAL BILL REPORT

SSB 6324

C 34 L 08

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Providing liability immunity for aerial search and rescue activities managed by the department of transportation.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators Sheldon, Haugen and Shin).

Senate Committee on Transportation

House Committee on Judiciary

Background: Under current law, the Aviation Division of the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) conducts and manages all aerial search and rescue activities within the state that typically involves downed aircraft. However, as part of their emergency management responsibilities, local law enforcement officers generally manage those aerial search and rescue activities that support ground missions (e.g., missing persons or downed aircraft when ground personnel are used). Search and rescue activities managed by either the state or local governments often involve the use of volunteers.

HB 1073 (C 292 L 07), enacted during the 2007 Legislative Session, provides liability immunity for certain volunteer emergency workers while engaged in emergency management activities, including search and rescue activities. However, the liability immunity was provided only to those volunteers managed by a local emergency management organization or the state Military Department. HB 1073 did not specifically cover aerial search and rescue personnel managed by the WSDOT Aviation Division.

Summary: Persons registered with the WSDOT Aviation Division, and engaged in aerial search and rescue activities managed by WSDOT, are generally immune from liability for civil damages resulting from the activities. WSDOT is also immune from such liability.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	47	1
House	95	0

Effective: June 12, 2008