
Local Government Committee

SSB 5455

Brief Description: Addressing the delivery of basic firefighter training and testing.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Government Operations & Security (originally sponsored by Senators Rivers, Parlette, Hatfield and Hobbs).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Obligates the Director of Fire Protection to develop and adopt a plan for the Washington State Patrol's Fire Training Academy (Academy) to deliver basic firefighter training and testing to all public firefighting agencies in the state.
- Grants firefighting agencies the option of seeking reimbursement for their firefighter training expenses in lieu of obtaining training from the Academy.
- Establishes an order of priority for the type of firefighting agencies that receive the training, testing, or reimbursements, with volunteer fire departments being the first priority.
- Makes, subject to availability and administrative approval, the facilities and programs of the Academy available at no cost to fire service youth programs.

Hearing Date: 3/12/15

Staff: Ethan Moreno (786-7386).

Background:

Washington's Director of Fire Protection, a position also referred to as the Washington State Fire Marshal (Fire Marshal), is charged with providing training, certification, and coordination duties related to protecting life, property, and the environment from fire. The Fire Marshal is appointed by the Chief of the Washington State Patrol (WSP), and the Fire Marshal's office operates as a bureau within the WSP. Bureau staff is located in its Olympia headquarters office, at the WSP Fire Training Academy (Academy) in North Bend, and in eight field offices around the state.

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.

Among other duties established in statute, the Fire Marshal must develop and adopt a plan with a goal of providing Fire Fighter I and wildland training to all firefighters in the state. The term "Fire Fighter I" is used to designate a specific level of training, knowledge, and skills that relate to functioning safely and effectively as an integral member of a firefighting team. "Wildland training" refers to a type of training that prepares firefighters for fighting wildfires.

In accordance with statutory provisions, the Fire Marshal reimburses firefighting entities for the costs incurred by these entities in providing their own training to firefighters. For example, wildland training reimbursement must be provided by the WSP to fire protection districts (fire districts) and city fire departments (fire departments) if certain requirements are met. Additionally, the training plan of the State Fire Marshal must include a reimbursement for fire districts and fire departments of not less than \$3 per hour of Fire Fighter I or wildland training. The reimbursements that WSP can provide per firefighter for Fire Fighter I or wildland training may not exceed 200 hours.

Summary of Bill:

The Director of Fire Protection (Fire Marshal), rather than developing and adopting a plan with a goal of providing Fire Fighter I and wildland training to all firefighters in the state, must develop and adopt a plan for the WSP Fire Training Academy to deliver basic firefighter training and testing, up to and including the requirements of Fire Fighter I, which is identified as the National Fire Protection Association Standard 1001. The training and testing is for all city fire departments (fire departments), fire protection districts (fire districts), regional fire protection service authorities (RFAs), and other municipal fire agencies in Washington. The training must be provided by the Fire Training Academy at its North Bend facilities, or regionally at local fire agencies. As an alternative to receiving training and testing for firefighters from the Fire Training Academy, fire departments, fire districts, RFAs, and other municipal fire agencies may seek reimbursement for their firefighter training expenses.

The providing of either: (1) "direct delivery of training," a term that includes all resources, personnel, and equipment necessary to deliver training statewide or at the Fire Training Academy; or (2) reimbursement of training expenses to fire departments, fire districts, RFAs, and other municipal fire agencies must be accomplished according to a delineated order of priority.

- The first priority is for volunteer departments, a term defined to mean departments with volunteer emergency service personnel comprising at least 85 percent of its department membership.
- The second priority is for combination departments, a term defined to mean fire departments with emergency service personnel comprising less than 85 percent of either volunteer or career membership.
- The third priority is for agencies that use only career firefighters and fire officers.

Training cost reimbursement provisions that established a minimum hourly rate and maximum reimbursable hours are replaced with new requirements. The amount of reimbursement provided to fire agencies for conducting their own Fire Fighter I training will be calculated on a per capita basis using a formula that considers, in part, the three-year statewide firefighter per capita average for the regional direct delivery of training by the Fire Training Academy.

Subject to facility and program availability, and approval by the Director of Fire Protection, the facilities and programs of the Fire Training Academy are made available at no cost to fire service youth programs. The expressed goals of making the facilities and programs available are to increase enrollment of volunteer firefighters, and to improve gender, cultural, and ethnic diversity within the fire service.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available on original bill.

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