

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 1279

As Passed House:
February 28, 2017

Title: An act relating to school safety drills.

Brief Description: Concerning school safety drills.

Sponsors: House Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Representative Pettigrew).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Education: 1/30/17, 2/9/17 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/28/17, 98-0.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Revises the list of nine safety-related drills that schools must conduct per year by specifying that schools teach three basic functional drills: shelter-in-place, lockdown, and evacuation.
- Provides that the drills incorporate an earthquake drill and a pedestrian evacuation drill for schools in mapped tsunami hazard zones.
- Directs that schools must maintain documentation of the drills, including type of drill, in the school office.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 19 members: Representatives Santos, Chair; Dolan, Vice Chair; Stonier, Vice Chair; Harris, Ranking Minority Member; Muri, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Caldier, Hargrove, Johnson, Kilduff, Lovick, McCaslin, Ortiz-Self, Senn, Slatter, Springer, Steele, Stokesbary and Volz.

Staff: Megan Wargacki (786-7194).

Background:

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.

Schools and school districts are required by statute to develop comprehensive safe school plans. Specified components of the plans include:

- emergency mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery;
- provisions for assisting and communicating with students and staff; and
- guidelines for requesting law enforcement and emergency response agencies to meet with school districts and participate in safety-related drills.

Schools are directed to conduct no less than one safety-related drill each month that school is in session. Schools must complete at least:

- one drill using the school mapping information system;
- three drills for lockdowns;
- one drill for shelter-in-place;
- three drills for fire evacuation in accordance with the state fire code; and
- one other safety-related drill to be determined by the school.

In addition, schools are encouraged to consider drills for earthquakes, tsunamis, or other high-risk local events.

A 2012 report from the Washington Emergency Management Council's Seismic Safety Committee included recommendations to make schools more resilient structurally, socially, and educationally. One of the recommendations was to enact legislation that requires school districts to conduct at least one earthquake safety drill per school year, and requires schools in mapped tsunami hazard zones to conduct a pedestrian evacuation drill annually. The recommendation specified that the law should explicitly require drop, cover, and hold as the state's approved earthquake safety technique.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Due to geographic location, schools have unique safety challenges. It is the responsibility of school principals and administrators to assess the threats and hazards most likely to impact their school, and to practice the three basic functional drills: shelter-in-place, lockdown, and evacuation, as these drills relate to those threats and hazards. Some threats or hazards may require the use of more than one basic functional drill.

Schools must conduct at least one safety-related drill per month, including summer months when school is in session. These drills must teach students three basic functional drill responses:

- "shelter-in-place," used to limit the exposure of students and staff to hazardous materials, such as chemical, biological, or radiological contaminants, released into the environment by isolating the inside environment from the outside;
- "lockdown," used to isolate students and staff from threats of violence, such as suspicious trespassers or armed intruders, that may occur in a school or in the vicinity of a school; and
- "evacuation," used to move students and staff away from threats, such as fires, oil train spills, or tsunamis.

The required drills must incorporate:

- an earthquake drill using the state approved earthquake safety technique "drop, cover, and hold;"
- use of the school mapping information system in at least one of the safety-related drills; and
- a pedestrian evacuation drill for schools in mapped tsunami hazard zones.

Schools must maintain documentation of the drills, including type of drill, in the school office.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The big one is coming, it is just a matter of time. This bill does not address structural issues; it is a small effort to address the potential loss and injury to life. Preparing for earthquakes helps protect students and staff in the case of other emergencies. There is an idea of adding active shooter drills to the bill.

(Opposed) None.

(Other) The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction has had "shake out" drills annually for the past few years. One concern with the bill is that it increases the number of required drills per school year to 11. Making it so that there is only one drill per month would improve the bill.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Pettigrew, prime sponsor.

(Other) Mike Donlin, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.