

FINAL BILL REPORT

E2SHB 1899

C 143 L 24
Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Facilitating reconstruction of communities damaged or destroyed by wildfires.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Volz, Schmidt, Chapman, Graham, Rule, Leavitt, Waters, Low, Christian, Couture, McClintock, Barnard, Jacobsen, Timmons, Schmick, Dent, Cheney, Sandlin and Griffey).

House Committee on Local Government
House Committee on Appropriations
Senate Committee on State Government & Elections
Senate Committee on Ways & Means

Background:

In 2023 Washington was subjected to a number of wildfires. On August 18, 2023, two wildfires began in Spokane County that, together, destroyed more than 360 primary homes and damaged over 400 more. On August 19, 2023, the Governor declared a state of emergency throughout the state due to the wildfires.

Summary:

The Department of Commerce (Department) must establish and administer a disaster relief payment program to provide assistance to qualifying property owners and local governments that had buildings damaged or destroyed by wildfires. In order to be eligible for a disaster relief payment, a property owner who had a building damaged or destroyed during a wildfire must meet the following criteria:

- The building must have been damaged or destroyed between August 1 and October 1, 2023, in Spokane County.
- The area in which the building was damaged or destroyed must have been under a state of emergency declared by the Governor or a local government due to wildfires.
- The building must have been a residential building, multifamily building, commercial

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- building, or a building owned and used by a local government.
- The same type of building that was damaged or destroyed is being repaired or reconstructed.
- The new or repaired building will comply with all Code and Energy Code requirements in effect at the time of the permit application for the construction or repair.

A disaster relief payment from the Department may only be used to comply with any increase in Energy Code standards since the time that the building was originally constructed, to provide or increase electric vehicle charging capacity, or to install solar panels on a building that did not, prior to being damaged or destroyed, use solar panels.

The Department must develop a system for how applications are to be submitted and evaluated in consultation with the Military Department and tribal and local government emergency management authorities. The system must ensure that disaster relief payments are only used for the allowed purposes. The Department must develop criteria for awarding disaster relief payment that is consistent with that used by the individual emergency assistance program administered by the Adjutant General and, as appropriate, with other disaster response and recovery programs.

When awarding disaster relief payment, the Department must prioritize buildings owned or rented by households with an adjusted income that is at or below 120 percent of the median household income in the county. After that, disaster relief payment must be awarded based on the environmental benefits that will be realized from the increased energy efficiency, electric vehicle charging capacity, or solar panel use by the building for which the disaster relief payment is awarded.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	96	1	
Senate	45	1	(Senate amended)
House	96	0	(House concurred)

Effective: March 18, 2024