

---

## Local Government Committee

---

### HB 1654

**Brief Description:** Concerning the administration of the international fire code.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Donaghy, Reeves, Griffey, Bronoske, Parshley, Ramel, Obras, Berg, Stonier, Taylor and Nance.

#### Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows fire protection districts or regional fire protection service authorities with more than \$10 million in revenue over the preceding three years to assume responsibility for administering and enforcing the International Fire Code within their jurisdiction.
- Requires fire protection districts or regional fire protection service authorities that assume responsibility for administering and enforcing the International Fire Code to offer equivalent jobs to any employee from the county fire marshal's office that was displaced because of the assumption of responsibility.

**Hearing Date:** 2/12/25

**Staff:** Kellen Wright (786-7134).

#### **Background:**

The International Fire Code.

The State Building Code (Code) consists of the State Energy Code, various model codes adopted by reference, and any changes that the State Building Code Council has made to the model codes. Local governments may adopt amendments to the Code, though the amendments may not lower the minimum performance standards of the Code.

---

*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

One of the model codes incorporated into the Code is the International Fire Code (IFC). The IFC contains regulations related to safeguarding life and property from fire and explosion. Counties, through county fire marshals, generally administer and enforce the IFC in the unincorporated areas of the county. There are two exceptions from this general rule. First, any political subdivision or municipal corporation that provides fire protection for its own airport may decide to also administer and enforce the IFC at the airport. Second, a fire protection district or city may enter into an agreement with the county to assume any or all of the responsibility for administering the IFC in the unincorporated areas of the county.

Counties are authorized to impose fees to pay for the cost of inspections, administration, and enforcement of the IFC.

#### Fire Protection Districts and Regional Fire Protection Service Authorities.

Fire protection districts are political subdivisions and municipal corporations that provide fire prevention, suppression, and emergency medical services within the bounds of the district. Outside of fire protection districts formed within a single city or town, the formation of a fire protection district is initiated by a petition to the county legislative authority from voters within the proposed district. If the county legislative authority approves the petition, it goes before voters at the next general election. If approved by voters, the district is formed. A fire protection district can annex new territory, including cities and towns, either through petition or election in the territory to be annexed.

A city or town may also form a fire protection district if the legislative authority of the city or town adopts a resolution to establish the fire protection district within the city or town and voters approve the creation of the district at the next general election.

Multiple fire protection districts may join together to create and jointly operate a regional fire protection service authority (authority). Voters within the area that the authority will serve must approve a service plan for the area proposed by the authority in order for the authority to be created.

Fire protection districts and authorities are authorized to levy property taxes on properties within their boundaries. Generally, the levy rate cannot exceed \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed value, though levies exceeding this limit can be authorized by voters. As an alternative to imposing 50 cents of the property tax levy rate, a fire protection district or authority can instead, with voter approval, implement a benefit charge on properties within the district. Benefit charges are charged at different rates for different properties, with the rate proportional to the benefits to the property provided by the fire protection district or authority.

#### **Summary of Bill:**

A fire protection district or authority with more than \$10 million in annual revenue for the preceding three years, or an authority that is being formed by districts with combined revenues of

more than \$10 million for the preceding three years, may assume responsibility for the administration and enforcement of the IFC, including conducting investigations, planning review, and building inspections, within the fire protection district or authority's jurisdiction. The fire protection district or authority must give the county at least six months' notice before assuming this responsibility. The fire protection district or authority must offer an equivalent position to all workers displaced from the county fire marshal's office because of the fire protection district or authority's assumption of authority.

A fire protection district or authority that has assumed authority for administering and enforcing the IFC within its jurisdiction may impose fees to pay for the cost of inspections of such administration and enforcement.

An authority, like a fire protection district or a city, may enter into an agreement to administer and enforce the IFC within the county.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on February 5, 2025.

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