
SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 1201

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2025 Regular Session

By House Technology, Economic Development, & Veterans (originally sponsored by Representatives Leavitt, Ryu, Macri, Bronoske, Simmons, and Berg)

READ FIRST TIME 01/31/25.

1 AN ACT Relating to identifying accommodations allowing pets in an
2 emergency or extreme weather event; amending RCW 38.52.070; adding a
3 new section to chapter 38.52 RCW; and creating a new section.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that natural
6 disasters and extreme weather events, including wildfire, flooding,
7 earthquakes, extreme heat, and extreme cold present severe risks to
8 public health and safety in Washington.

9 The legislature further finds that pets that are companion
10 animals are particularly vulnerable to extreme weather conditions,
11 including risk of heatstroke-related illness and death.

12 The legislature further finds that many families consider their
13 companion animals to be family members. One of the most significant
14 factors affecting evacuation decisions is companion animal ownership.
15 Companion animal owners may refuse evacuation, attempt to reenter
16 evacuated sites to rescue their companion animals, and experience
17 grief, depression, and posttraumatic stress disorder due to
18 separation from their companion animal during an emergency. In
19 addition, zoonotic disease risks increase when companion animals are
20 abandoned or left to roam during an evacuation.

1 The legislature further finds that gaps in public preparedness
2 and cosheltering opportunities during a disaster or extreme weather
3 event increase the risk to public health and safety.

4 The legislature further finds that partnerships with
5 nongovernmental organizations support emergency planning and
6 preparedness and may be used to support identification and operation
7 of coshelters.

8 Therefore, the legislature intends to provide guidance in
9 increasing public preparedness and identifying shelters that can
10 accommodate companion animals so that in the event of a disaster or
11 extreme weather event, Washington residents will not have to choose
12 between seeking safety and staying with their companion animals.

13 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 38.52
14 RCW to read as follows:

15 (1) A political subdivision, under existing plan structures,
16 shall, to the extent practicable based on available resources and
17 site-specific circumstances, identify coshelters, emergency shelters,
18 cooling centers, and warming centers able to accommodate persons with
19 companion animals in each update of its local comprehensive emergency
20 management plan required by RCW 38.52.070.

21 (a) A local comprehensive emergency management plan must:

22 (i) Identify at least one emergency shelter within a political
23 subdivision's jurisdiction, to the extent practicable, that can
24 accommodate persons with companion animals;

25 (ii) Identify at least one cooling center within a political
26 subdivision's jurisdiction, to the extent practicable, that can
27 accommodate persons with companion animals;

28 (iii) Identify at least one heating center within a political
29 subdivision's jurisdiction, to the extent practicable, that can
30 accommodate persons with companion animals; and

31 (iv) Identify a coshelter within a political subdivision's
32 jurisdiction, to the extent practicable, available for persons with
33 companion animals during an emergency or extreme weather condition.

34 (b) An emergency shelter that is identified to accommodate
35 persons with companion animals must have safety procedures regarding
36 the sheltering of companion animals and comply with disaster
37 assistance policies and procedures published by the federal emergency
38 management agency.

1 (2) A political subdivision shall provide companion animal
2 emergency preparedness information on its website, including:

3 (a) To the extent practicable, whether each designated emergency
4 shelter, cooling center, or heating center can accommodate companion
5 animals;

6 (b) Information for creating a companion animal evacuation plan
7 and emergency checklist, consistent with the federal emergency
8 management agency recommendations; and

9 (c) Identification of local organizations that provide emergency
10 companion animal assistance.

11 (3) The following definitions apply to this section:

12 (a) "Companion animal" means a domesticated animal, such as a dog
13 or cat, that is commonly kept in the home for pleasure rather than
14 for commercial purposes;

15 (b) "Cooling center" means a facility that mitigates the public
16 health impacts of extreme heat;

17 (c) "Coshelter" means a temporary public shelter that allows an
18 individual to bring a companion animal to the shelter;

19 (d) "Emergency shelter" means a temporary location that provides
20 basic shelter for individuals affected by an emergency or disaster;
21 and

22 (e) "Warming center" means a facility that mitigates the public
23 health impacts of extreme cold.

24 **Sec. 3.** RCW 38.52.070 and 2024 c 331 s 1 are each amended to
25 read as follows:

26 (1) Each political subdivision of this state is hereby authorized
27 and directed to establish a local organization or to be a member of a
28 joint local organization for emergency management in accordance with
29 the state comprehensive emergency management plan and program:
30 PROVIDED, That a political subdivision proposing such establishment
31 shall submit its plan and program for emergency management to the
32 state director and secure his or her recommendations thereon, and
33 verification of consistency with the state comprehensive emergency
34 management plan, in order that the plan of the local organization for
35 emergency management may be coordinated with the plan and program of
36 the state. Local comprehensive emergency management plans must
37 specify the use of the incident command system for multiagency/
38 multijurisdiction operations. No political subdivision may be
39 required to include in its plan provisions for the emergency

1 evacuation or relocation of residents in anticipation of nuclear
2 attack. If the director's recommendations are adverse to the plan as
3 submitted, and, if the local organization does not agree to the
4 director's recommendations for modification to the proposal, the
5 matter shall be referred to the council for final action. The
6 director may authorize two or more political subdivisions to join in
7 the establishment and operation of a joint local organization for
8 emergency management as circumstances may warrant, in which case each
9 political subdivision shall contribute to the cost of emergency
10 management upon such fair and equitable basis as may be determined
11 upon by the executive heads of the constituent subdivisions. If in
12 any case the executive heads cannot agree upon the proper division of
13 cost the matter shall be referred to the council for arbitration and
14 its decision shall be final. When two or more political subdivisions
15 join in the establishment and operation of a joint local organization
16 for emergency management each shall pay its share of the cost into a
17 special pooled fund to be administered by the treasurer of the most
18 populous subdivision, which fund shall be known as the
19 emergency management fund. Each local organization or joint local
20 organization for emergency management shall have a director who shall
21 be appointed by the executive head of the political subdivision, and
22 who shall have direct responsibility for the organization,
23 administration, and operation of such local organization for
24 emergency management, subject to the direction and control of such
25 executive officer or officers. In the case of a joint local
26 organization for emergency management, the director shall be
27 appointed by the joint action of the executive heads of the
28 constituent political subdivisions. Each local organization or joint
29 local organization for emergency management shall perform emergency
30 management functions within the territorial limits of the political
31 subdivision within which it is organized, and, in addition, shall
32 conduct such functions outside of such territorial limits as may be
33 required pursuant to the provisions of this chapter.

34 (2) In carrying out the provisions of this chapter each political
35 subdivision, in which any disaster as described in RCW 38.52.020
36 occurs, shall have the power to enter into contracts and incur
37 obligations necessary to combat such disaster, protecting the health
38 and safety of persons and property, and providing emergency
39 assistance to the victims of such disaster. Each political
40 subdivision is authorized to exercise the powers vested under this

1 section in the light of the exigencies of an extreme emergency
2 situation without regard to time-consuming procedures and formalities
3 prescribed by law (excepting mandatory constitutional requirements),
4 including, but not limited to, budget law limitations, requirements
5 of competitive bidding and publication of notices, provisions
6 pertaining to the performance of public work, entering into
7 contracts, the incurring of obligations, the employment of temporary
8 workers, the rental of equipment, the purchase of supplies and
9 materials, the levying of taxes, and the appropriation and
10 expenditures of public funds.

11 (3) (a) (i) Each local organization or joint local organization for
12 emergency management that produces a local comprehensive emergency
13 management plan must include a communication plan for notifying
14 significant population segments of life safety information during an
15 emergency. Local organizations and joint local organizations are
16 encouraged to consult with affected community organizations in the
17 development of the communication plans. Communication plans must
18 include an expeditious notification of citizens who can reasonably be
19 determined to be at risk during a hazardous material spill or release
20 pursuant to RCW 70.136.080.

21 (ii) In developing communication plans, local organizations and
22 joint organizations should consider, as part of their determination
23 of the extent of the obligation to provide emergency notification to
24 significant population segments, the following factors: The number or
25 proportion of the limited English proficiency persons eligible to be
26 served or likely to be encountered; the frequency with which limited
27 English proficiency individuals come in contact with the emergency
28 notification; the nature and importance of the emergency
29 notification, service, or program to people's lives; and the
30 resources available to the political subdivision to provide emergency
31 notifications.

32 (iii) "Significant population segment" means, for the purposes of
33 this subsection (3), each limited English proficiency language group
34 that constitutes five percent or one thousand residents, whichever is
35 less, of the population of persons eligible to be served or likely to
36 be affected within a city, town, or county. The office of financial
37 management forecasting division's limited English proficiency
38 population estimates are the demographic data set for determining
39 eligible limited English proficiency language groups.

1 (b) (i) Local organizations and joint local organizations must
2 submit the plans produced under (a) of this subsection to the
3 Washington military department emergency management division, and
4 must implement those plans. An initial communication plan must be
5 submitted with the local organization or joint local organization's
6 next local emergency management plan update following July 23, 2017,
7 and subsequent plans must be reviewed in accordance with the
8 director's schedule.

9 (ii) To the extent practicable based on available resources, a
10 political subdivision must identify the location of a coshelter
11 during an emergency in each update of its local emergency management
12 plan.

13 (iii) For the purpose of this subsection, "coshelter" has the
14 same meaning as in section 2 of this act.

15 (4) When conducting emergency or disaster after-action reviews,
16 local organizations and joint local organizations must evaluate the
17 effectiveness of communication of life safety information and must
18 inform the emergency management division of the Washington military
19 department of technological challenges which limited communications
20 efforts, along with identifying recommendations and resources needed
21 to address those challenges.

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