

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 2325
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Homeland Security & Public Safety
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The impact and immediate aftermath of Hurricane Harvey exposed various deficiencies in the state's emergency communications network and the ability to broadly distribute reliable and valuable information. C.S.H.B. 2325 seeks to address those deficiencies by directing the Texas Division of Emergency Management to conduct a study on the use of a standard communication format by first responders to create a common interoperable operating framework during a disaster and providing for the creation of public awareness campaigns, local emergency assistance registry plans, and a disaster web portal to act as a clearinghouse for information during a disaster.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 2325 amends the Government Code to require the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) to do the following:

- coordinate, in consultation with the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension service, state and local government efforts to make 9-1-1 emergency service capable of receiving text messages from a cellular telephone or other wireless communication device;
- develop standards, in consultation with any state agency or private entity TDEM determines is appropriate, for the use of social media as a communication tool by governmental entities during and after a disaster;
- develop a mobile application for wireless communication devices to communicate critical information during a disaster directly to disaster victims and first responders; and
- develop a comprehensive disaster web portal.

C.S.H.B. 2325 sets out requirements for the social media standards and the web portal and authorizes the mobile application to provide information on road and weather conditions during a disaster and on disaster response and recovery activities. The bill requires TDEM, to the extent feasible, to use data analytics software to integrate data from federal, state, local, and nongovernmental sources to more effectively manage disaster response and recovery.

C.S.H.B. 2325 requires TDEM, for purposes of improving the state's response to disasters, to

conduct a study on the use of a standard communication format by first responders to create a common interoperable operating framework during a disaster. The bill sets out certain requirements for the study and requires TDEM, not later than September 1, 2020, to submit to the governor, lieutenant governor, and members of the legislature a report on the findings of the study. These provisions expire December 1, 2020.

C.S.H.B. 2325 requires certain specified governmental entities to conduct annual community outreach, including public awareness campaigns, and education activities on disaster preparedness.

C.S.H.B. 2325 requires the presiding officer of the governing body of an incorporated city or a county or the chief administrative officer of a joint board who is designated an emergency management director for that political subdivision to develop a plan to use information, during the subdivision's response to a disaster, from the emergency assistance registry maintained by TDEM that provides local emergency planners and emergency responders with additional information on the needs of certain individuals in their communities. The bill requires the director to publish the plan on the subdivision's website and the Department of Public Safety (DPS) website. The bill requires TDEM to develop a process by which such a plan may be published to the DPS website and to establish a designated area on that website for the public to view the plan.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2019.

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE

While C.S.H.B. 2325 may differ from the original in minor or nonsubstantive ways, the following summarizes the substantial differences between the introduced and committee substitute versions of the bill.

The substitute changes the entity responsible for developing the comprehensive disaster web portal from The Texas A&M University System, in consultation with the governor and TDEM, to TDEM.

The substitute includes a provision requiring a designated emergency management director of a political subdivision to develop a plan to use the emergency assistance registry maintained by TDEM.

The substitute revises the entities required to conduct the community outreach.

The substitute does not include a provision requiring the study on the use of a standard communication format to be conducted in consultation with the Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service. The substitute includes a provision specifying that the common operating framework that is to be created by the studied format is interoperable.

The substitute does not include a provision requiring the mobile application to be developed by TDEM in consultation with the Texas A&M Forest Service and does not include a provision requiring TDEM to consult with the Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service in developing standards for the use of social media as a communication tool by governmental entities.