

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 671
By: Martinez
Homeland Security & Public Safety
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Recent natural disasters, such as Hurricane Harvey and Winter Storm Uri, continue to prove the urgent need for a disaster identification system for a declared state of disaster in Texas. It has been suggested that the implementation of such a system would help responders more effectively identify potential victims in a search, especially during times of low visibility or at night, by providing for the use of an illuminated display device that allows participating individuals and household members affected by a disaster to signal their status to responders. H.B. 671 seeks to address this issue by establishing a disaster identification system involving the use of illumination displays.

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

H.B. 671 amends the Government Code to provide for the creation of a disaster identification system under which illuminated displays capable of displaying a flashing light and a continuous light in certain colors are used to communicate with disaster relief personnel in an area subject to a disaster declaration. The bill establishes that an executive order or proclamation declaring a state of disaster activates the system for the area subject to the declaration. The bill authorizes a person in the area to elect to participate in the activated system and requires a participating person to do the following:

- affix an illuminated display of a certain specified color to each individual and domesticated animal in the person's household; and
- use the illuminated display to signal to disaster relief personnel responding to the disaster area with a continuous light on the display of each household member who does not need medical assistance and a flashing light on the display of each household member who needs medical assistance.

The bill authorizes disaster relief personnel to patrol the designated disaster area by air or ground at night to locate individuals or animals with activated displays. The bill includes provisions for the use of the disaster identification system among the information the Texas Division of Emergency Management may include in the comprehensive state emergency management plan.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2021.