

SUBJECT: Requiring public meetings on emergency management plans

COMMITTEE: Energy Resources — favorable, with amendment

VOTE: 5 ayes — West, Farabee, E. Jones, Canales, B. Keffer
0 nays
2 absent — Crabb, Delisi

WITNESSES: For — *(Registered, but did not testify:)* Kinnan Golemon, Devon Energy; Patrick Nugent, Texas Pipeline Association; Shayne Woodard, Duke Energy
Against — None
On — *(Registered, but did not testify:)* Mary L. McDaniel, Texas Railroad Commission

BACKGROUND: Government Code, ch. 418, subchapter E governs local and interjurisdictional emergency management in Texas. Sec. 418.106 requires each local and interjurisdictional disaster agency to maintain an emergency management plan to provide for disaster preparedness and response.

DIGEST: HB 1512, as amended, would require each local or interjurisdictional disaster agency to hold at least one public meeting per year to exchange information about its emergency management plan. An agency would have to provide written notice of the date, time, and location of the meeting to the Texas Railroad Commission's (RRC) pipeline safety section at least five days before the meeting. The requirement for a public meeting would not apply to an emergency management plan that contained sensitive information about privately owned infrastructure or facilities if their safety could be jeopardized by disclosure of the plan.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2003.

SUPPORTERS SAY: HB 1512, as amended, would ensure that emergency management agencies are made aware of important emergency response activities. While planning

HB 1512
House Research Organization
page 2

committees are required to exchange information regarding emergency preparedness, public meetings would facilitate discussion among groups that interact infrequently. The bill would not require a local agency to hold a public meeting that might compromise the security of privately owned critical infrastructure or facilities.

HB 1512 would enable pipeline operators to share important information about their facilities with officials who coordinate local disaster response. Emergency response agencies would have to notify the RRC so that agency representatives could attend the meetings and coordinate pipeline safety efforts across the state. The public meeting requirement would be particularly important in rural areas, since small or volunteer emergency planning agencies often find it difficult to maintain current information regarding pipeline safety.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

No apparent opposition.

NOTES:

The committee amended the filed version of HB 1512 by adding the exemption for an emergency management plan that contained sensitive information about privately owned infrastructure or facilities.