

- SUBJECT:** Licensing and training of residential fire alarm technicians
- COMMITTEE:** Insurance — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 7 ayes — Smithee, T. Smith, Taylor, Eiland, Hancock, Vo, Woolley  
0 nays  
2 absent — Martinez, Thompson
- WITNESSES:** For — Brian McKinney, Houston Gulf Coast Alarm Association and Texas Burglar and Fire Alarm Association; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Jeff Bright, Rodney Hooker, Howard Manson, Andrea McWilliams, Texas Burglar and Fire Alarm Association; Michael J. Moliere, Houston Gulf Coast Alarm Association; Debra G. Ulmer, South Texas Alarm Association)  
  
Against — None  
  
On — Mark Redlitz, State Fire Marshal's Office
- BACKGROUND:** Insurance Code, Art. 5.43-2, regulates the planning, certifying, leasing, selling, servicing, installing, monitoring, and maintaining of fire detection and fire alarm devices and systems. Each person or organization engaged in this business must have a certificate of registration issued for an initial fee of \$500, with a renewal fee of \$250.  
  
To qualify for a license, an applicant must pass a written exam and show proof of general liability insurance coverage that includes products and completed operations coverage. Applicants must complete a 16-hour training curriculum offered by training schools within 125 miles of each county in the state with a population of 500,000 or more.
- DIGEST:** CSHB 2118 would amend Insurance Code, Art. 5.43-2, to establish licensing requirements for "residential fire alarm technicians" and to amend certain statutes governing all fire alarm technicians.  
  
To qualify for a license as a residential fire alarm technician, an applicant would have to pay an application fee of \$50 and complete an approved

eight-hour training course of instruction on installing, servicing, and maintaining single-family and two-family residential fire alarm systems.

Records maintained by the State Fire Marshal's Office on the home address, home telephone number, driver's license number, or social security number of an applicant or license holder under Insurance Code, Art. 5.43-2 would not be subject to the Public Information (Open Records) Act. A municipality could not require a registered fire alarm firm, a licensee, or an employee of a firm to maintain a business location or residency within that political subdivision to conduct business or perform activities authorized under Insurance Code, Art. 5.43-2.

A municipality or county could by ordinance require a registered firm to make a phone call to a monitored property before it notified a municipality of a fire alarm call from a fire detection device. Printed information provided when fire detection systems are installed would have to include information that would aid in reducing the number of false fire alarms.

CSHB 2118 would take effect September 1, 2007. The insurance commissioner would have to adopt rules to implement changes in the bill by March 1, 2008, and residential fire alarm technicians would not be required to obtain a license before June 1, 2008.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

CSHB 2118 would establish a separate license for fire alarm technicians that install residential systems to distinguish them from commercial fire alarm installers. The new requirements would recognize the differences between commercial and residential technicians by establishing less stringent and more appropriate licensing and testing requirements for residential technicians.

Currently, training and licensing for fire alarm technicians is geared towards commercial installation. Different training standards and licensing requirements are needed for residential installers. CSHB 2118 would create this distinction and open the residential profession to more applicants who may not wish to make the training and financial commitments required of commercial installers.

The bill would change statutory provisions affecting all fire alarm technicians to provide more privacy protections needed for homeland security. The bill also would prohibit unfair municipal requirements that fire alarm technicians reside in that municipality. Many companies

provide statewide services, and residency requirements give an unfair advantage to local businesses.

**OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

The addition of a license for residential fire alarm technicians could create confusion about whether commercial license holders are authorized to install residential systems.

**OTHER  
OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

Residential fire alarm technicians should be able to take certification courses on line instead of having to travel to Austin or another large city to take licensing classes.

**NOTES:**

The committee substitute revised the definition of a residential fire alarm technician and eliminated references to superintendents in licensing requirements.