

SUBJECT: Creating a work group to enhance the training of emergency personnel

COMMITTEE: Homeland Security and Public Safety — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 9 ayes — Nevárez, Paul, Burns, Calanni, Clardy, Goodwin, Israel, Lang, Tinderholt

0 nays

WITNESSES: For — Donald A Loucks; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Jim Allison, County Judges and Commissioners Association of Texas; Gabriela Villareal, Texas Conference of Urban Counties; Randy Cain, Texas Fire Chiefs Association)

Against — None

On — Nim Kidd, Texas Division of Emergency Management and Texas Emergency Management Council

BACKGROUND: Government Code sec. 418.005 requires certain elected officials to complete a training course regarding state and local governments' emergency management responsibilities.

DIGEST: CSHB 2305 would require the Texas Division of Emergency Management to create a work group made up of emergency management experts to study and develop a proposal for enhancing the training and credentialing of state and local emergency management personnel.

The bill would require the work group to consider:

- whether the differences in geography, population, and critical infrastructure between emergency management directors' or coordinators' jurisdictions warranted different levels of training and credentialing;
- whether the Legislature should enact laws that would require

emergency management directors or coordinators to participate in emergency management training and credentialing before overseeing the response to and recovery from a disaster;

- whether the training should include information on disaster finance, damage assessment, disaster contracting, debris management, and skills needed to participate in federal emergency management programs;
- whether to implement incentives for emergency management personnel to complete additional training and continuing education;
- proposals for paying for training for emergency management directors and coordinators that was more rigorous than the training required for them by law as of the bill's effective date.

CSHB 2305 would require the work group to assess the training and credentials necessary for emergency management personnel to effectively oversee the response to and recovery from a disaster. The work group would be required to consult with institutions of higher education on the development of degree programs in emergency management.

The work group would have to submit the proposal to the Legislature and the governor by November 1, 2020. The work group would be abolished January 1, 2021.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2019.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

CSHB 2305 would strengthen Texas' response to emergencies by establishing a work group to propose a training framework for emergency personnel that could be implemented in communities across the state.

Although the state already offers courses in emergency management training, CSHB 2305 could increase the thoroughness of current offerings based on recommendations by the Governor's Commission to Rebuild Texas. The majority of current coursework on emergency management focuses on response, rather than recovery. The bill would strengthen the training by requiring the study group to consider courses that may aid in

recovery, such as disaster finance or debris management. Additionally, the bill would require the work group to consider whether it would be necessary for the Legislature to enact laws requiring the training and credentialing.

The bill would ensure that the proposal for enhancing the training and credentialing of emergency management personnel was applicable to all regions of the state by requiring the work group to consider differences in geography, population, and critical infrastructure. The bill would require the group to determine if those factors warranted different levels of training and credentialing.

**OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

CSHB 2305 could unnecessarily burden existing emergency management personnel by developing a framework that might require them to take unnecessary training. Certain local governments have developed sophisticated response and recovery functions, and requiring courses that may not increase the quality of certain local governments' management response could discourage some personnel from serving as emergency management leaders. Also, different regions of the state face different hurdles when responding to and recovering from different emergency events, so in addition to having the work group assess different geographies and populations, ensuring regional and professional diversity of the work group would be important.