

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
80R3606 EJI-D

S.B. 1043
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Natural Resources
5/9/2007
As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Currently, there is no central registry for listing volunteer fire departments. Since January 1, 2005, wildfires have consumed 1.9 million acres of land, destroyed 639 homes, and caused more than \$500 million in property damage in this state. It is impossible to know at the regional level what equipment and personnel are available to respond to such regional disasters or other homeland security issues because there is no central registry that lists volunteer fire departments. Additionally, without adequate information regarding volunteer fire departments, it is difficult to encourage firefighter certification and compliance with safety standards.

As proposed, S.B. 1043 creates a volunteer fire department listing to be maintained by the Texas Forest Service of The Texas A&M University System which will include a complete list of volunteer fire departments and firefighting resources within this state.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Chapter 614, Government Code, by adding Subchapter H, as follows:

SUBCHAPTER H. ONLINE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT REGISTRY

Sec. 614.151. DEFINITIONS. Defines "part-paid fire department," "service," and "volunteer fire department."

Sec. 614.152. ADMINISTRATION OF ONLINE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT REGISTRY. Requires the Texas Forest Service of The Texas A&M University System (service) to establish and maintain an online registry of volunteer fire departments (departments) located in this state that is accessible to members of the public and to prescribe procedures necessary to implement this subchapter.

Sec. 614.153. REGISTRATION REQUIRED. (a) Requires each department in this state to register with the service by submitting to the service an application for registration under Section 614.154 and the registration fee in the amount set by the service.

(b) Prohibits a department in this state from engaging in firefighting activities involving a regional emergency incident for which the service provides coordination unless the department maintains a current registration with the service under this subchapter.

Sec. 614.154. APPLICATION FOR REGISTRATION. (a) Sets forth the information required to be included in the application for registration.

(b) Requires a department to submit an application online, except as provided by Subsection (c).

(c) Authorizes a department to apply for a waiver of the online registration requirement by submitting a written request to the service for a written registration application.

Sec. 614.155. RENEWAL OF REGISTRATION. Requires a department to renew the department's registration annually by filing a renewal application for registration and paying the registration renewal fee in a manner prescribed by the service.

Sec. 614.156. REGISTRATION AND REGISTRATION RENEWAL FEES. Requires the service to set a reasonable registration fee and registration renewal fee in an amount designed to cover the costs of administering this subchapter.

Sec. 614.157. PUBLIC INFORMATION. Provides that information submitted to the service in an application for registration or for renewal of registration is public information.

SECTION 2. Requires the service to establish the online registry required by Section 614.152, Government Code, as added by this Act, not later than January 1, 2008.

SECTION 3. Effective date: September 1, 2007.