

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
87R2780 MCF-F

H.B. 671
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Water, Agriculture & Rural Affairs
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Engrossed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

During natural disasters, effective communication with first responders is essential. Due to the challenges of communication in an emergency, especially during nighttime searches, illuminated devices are a powerful method of signaling first responders. Such devices are commonplace, and many mobile phones carry this functionality.

There is currently no standardized emergency signaling and identification system in Texas. Without such a system, first responders are not able to easily identify those in the disaster area, especially at night.

H.B. 671 establishes a disaster identification system and authorizes the use of an illuminated display device to communicate with disaster relief personnel. This emergency identification system will allow emergency personnel to more quickly and accurately divert attention to where it is most needed.

H.B. 671 amends current law relating to establishment of the disaster identification system for a declared state of disaster.

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 Section 418.004, Government Code, by adding Subdivision (3-a) to define "illuminated display" for purposes of Chapter 418 (Emergency Management).

SECTION 2. Amends Section 418.015(a), Government Code, to provide that an executive order or proclamation declaring a state of disaster, among other items, activates for the area subject to the declaration the disaster identification system described by Section 418.0151. Makes nonsubstantive changes.

SECTION 3. Amends Subchapter B, Chapter 418, Government Code, by adding Section 418.0151, as follows:

Sec. 418.0151. DISASTER IDENTIFICATION SYSTEM. (a) Authorizes a person, in an area subject to a state of disaster declaration, to elect to participate in the disaster identification system activated for the area. Requires that the system authorize the use of an illuminated display to communicate with disaster relief personnel.

(b) Requires a person participating in the disaster identification system to:

- (1) affix to each individual and domesticated animal in the person's household an illuminated display of certain specified colors; and
- (2) using the illuminated display, signal to disaster relief personnel responding to the area after the disaster with a continuous light on the

display of each household member who does not need medical assistance or with a flashing light on the display of each household member who needs medical assistance.

(c) Authorizes disaster relief personnel to patrol the designated disaster area by air or ground at night to locate individuals or animals with activated illuminated displays.

SECTION 4. Amends Section 418.042(a), Government Code, to authorize the comprehensive state emergency management plan prepared and kept current by the Texas Division of Emergency Management to include provisions for the use of the disaster identification system described by Section 418.0151. Makes nonsubstantive changes.

SECTION 5. Effective date: September 1, 2021.