

SUBJECT: Creating a fire department listing by the Texas Forest Service

COMMITTEE: Agriculture and Livestock — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 7 ayes — Miller, Anderson, B. Brown, Aycock, Gallego, Garcia, Heflin
0 nays

WITNESSES: For — Chris Barron, State Firemen's and Fire Marshal's Association
(*Registered, but did not testify:* Randy Cain, Texas Fire Chiefs Association)

Against — None

On — James B. Hull, Texas Forest Service

BACKGROUND: Since January 1, 2005, wildfires have consumed an estimated 1.9 million acres of land, destroyed 639 homes, and caused more than \$500 million in property damage across the state.

Duties of the Texas Forest Service of the Texas A&M University System are outlined in Education Code, ch. 88, subch. B. A director guides the service and may assume direction over forest interests, appoint necessary employees and assistants, take action to prevent and extinguish forest fires, enforce laws pertaining to forest protection, collect data on forest conditions, and prepare reports and recommendations.

DIGEST: The purpose of CSHB 1915 would be to:

- develop a list of Texas' fire departments and firefighting resources;
- prepare for the prompt and efficient response to a catastrophic disaster or incident; and
- support the statewide mutual aid program, as developed by the division of emergency management of the Governor's Office and the Texas Commission on Fire Protection.

CSHB 1915 would require the Texas Forest Service of the Texas A&M University System to establish and maintain a listing of fire departments in the state. For each department in the state, the listing would include:

- the name of the fire department ;
- the physical location;
- the mailing address;
- the number of firefighters and other affiliated personnel whose duties include responding to emergencies; and
- an itemized list of all firefighting equipment used for fire protection purposes, following the National Incident Management System guidelines

The list would be accessible to each state fire agency, including the firefighters' pension commissioner, Office of Rural Community Affairs, Texas Forest Service, Texas Commission on Fire Protection, Texas Engineering Extension Service of the Texas A & M University System and the Texas State Fire Marshal's Office of the Texas Department of Insurance.

State fire agencies and fire associations would coordinate and cooperate with the Texas Forest Service in developing the listing. Each fire department in the state would be listed and would provide the information in the manner prescribed by the service.

The Texas Forest Service would renew a fire department's listing annually. The service would establish this listing no later than January 1, 2008.

This bill would take effect September 1, 2007.

NOTES:

According to the Legislative Budget Board's fiscal note, the Texas Forest Service estimates it would need a full-time program coordinator and seasonal employee to create and maintain the database, resulting in an increase of 1.2 employees. The Texas Forest Service would adjust fees to cover the cost of database creation.