

- SUBJECT:** Creating regional emergency communication districts
- COMMITTEE:** Homeland Security and Public Safety — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 9 ayes — Phillips, Nevárez, Burns, Dale, Johnson, Metcalf, Moody, M. White, Wray
- 0 nays
- WITNESSES:** For — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Holly Deshields, Corporation for Texas Regionalism)
- Against — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Chris Kirkendall, South East Texas Regional Planning Commission)
- On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Kelli Merriweather, Commission on State Emergency Communications; Pete De La Cruz, South East Texas Regional Planning Commission)
- BACKGROUND:** Currently, 9-1-1 systems are run by regional planning commissions and emergency communication districts. Unlike emergency communication districts, which have a predictable source of revenue that supports full deployment of digital 9-1-1 services through the collection of 9-1-1 emergency fees, commission-run 9-1-1 systems under the Commission on State Emergency Communications rely on state appropriations. The uncertainty of funding levels for these 9-1-1 systems has made it difficult for regional planning commissions to replace outdated infrastructure.
- DIGEST:** CSHB 3462 would establish the Regional Emergency Communication Districts Act, which would allow for the creation of regional emergency communications districts in a 9-1-1 region. The bill would apply only to 9-1-1 regions in which the total population served by the 9-1-1 system was less than 1.5 million on September 1, 2015, and regions in which the governing bodies of each participating county and municipality in the 9-1-1 region adopted a resolution to participate in the district.

The bill would define a district as a political subdivision of the state that was authorized to carry out essential government functions, including entering into interlocal agreements with other emergency communication districts. The bill would establish how a district could be created and the territory that a district would include.

The bill would require that the district be governed by a board of managers composed largely of elected officials of the participating counties and municipalities. The bill would require these initial members to establish board regulations. It would establish the duties of the board regarding district budgets, rules and bylaws, and governing procedures.

The bill would require that the regional planning commission for the 9-1-1 region serve as the fiscal and administrative agent of the district. The executive director of the commission could serve as the director of the district, and the bill would establish the director's duties, including employing and compensating employees of the commission.

The district would prepare an annual report to include the amount and source of funds received and spent by the district and the results of an independent audit.

The bill would establish the methods by which the district would be required to provide 9-1-1 service and would make 9-1-1 service mandatory for each individual telephone subscriber in the district. It also would establish the digits 9-1-1 as the primary emergency telephone number and would allow public safety agencies to maintain separate numbers.

A 9-1-1 system would have to be capable of transmitting requests for firefighting, law enforcement, ambulance, and medical services to agency providers and could provide for other transmitting requests. The bill also would lay out rules regarding how and when a district could impose emergency service fees, how the board would regulate such fees, and how the fees would be collected.

Service suppliers would be required to identify the telephone number and address of the subscriber for each call, but all information would be considered confidential and not available for public inspection. The bill also would require the board to periodically hold public review hearings with proper notice and solicit public comments on the continuation of the district and the 9-1-1 emergency service fee. The board would adopt a resolution after the hearing on whether to continue the district and the 9-1-1 emergency service fee.

The bill would provide procedures for the dissolution of a district and discontinuance of 9-1-1 service and the assumption of district assets and service by the regional planning commission. The commission for a 9-1-1 region in which a district was established could transfer to the district any land, buildings, and other assets relating to the provision of 9-1-1 service.

This bill would take effect September 1, 2015.