

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
83R2814 JRR-D

S.B. 159
By: Carona
Intergovernmental Relations
2/4/2013
As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

In Texas, county judges have responsibility for emergency preparedness and response within their local jurisdictions. These officials may appoint an emergency management coordinator to manage day-to-day program activities. Increasingly, urban areas are hiring professional emergency managers who may be highly trained in incident command and response but, not being law enforcement officers, fire fighters, or health personnel, must mix with regular traffic when rushing to a disaster site, as current statutes do not recognize emergency managers among those authorized to use lights and sirens.

Authorized emergency vehicles are defined in Section 541.201(1) of the Transportation Code, and various other statutes set out the requirements and privileges thereof. Section 418.001 of the Government Code, also known as the Texas Disaster Act of 1975, designates the presiding officer of a county as the county's emergency management director who serves as the governor's designated agent, allows designation of an emergency management coordinator (Section 418.1015), and requires each county to maintain or participate in an emergency management program that serves as the first channel through which a municipal corporation or a joint board shall request assistance when its resources are exceeded (Section 418.102).

S.B. 159 amends Section 541.201(1) of the Transportation Code to add language that will authorize county-owned or county-leased emergency management vehicles to be classified as emergency vehicles authorized to operate with red and blue lights and sirens.

As proposed, S.B. 159 amends current law relating to the definition of an authorized emergency vehicle.

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 541.201(1), Transportation Code, to redefine "authorized emergency vehicle" to include a county-owned or county-leased emergency management vehicle that has been designated or authorized by the commissioners court; to change a reference to the Texas Department of Health to the Department of State Health Services; and to make nonsubstantive changes.

SECTION 2. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2013.