

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
83R2580 VOO-D

S.B. 223
By: Watson
Transportation
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

During the intense wildfire season of 2011, Chief Nim Kidd and the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) played a critical role in coordinating the response of state agencies.

Vehicles operated by TDEM are not currently authorized to be used as "emergency vehicles" during a local or state disaster, therefore these emergency responders are prohibited from using lights or sirens on their vehicles and are not granted immediate access to priority areas. The Texas Emergency Management Council, in concert with the chief of TDEM and the director of the Department of Public Safety of the State of Texas (DPS), can authorize certain organizations like the Red Cross or Salvation Army to operate certain vehicles as designated emergency vehicles in the case of a disaster under Section 418.013 (Emergency Management Council), Government Code.

As proposed, S.B. 223 amends current law relating to designation of certain vehicles of the Texas Division of Emergency Management as authorized emergency vehicles.

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(l), Transportation Code, to redefine "authorized emergency vehicle" to include a vehicle that has been designated by the Department of Public Safety of the State of Texas (DPS) under Section 546.0065, and to make nonsubstantive changes.

SECTION 2. Amends Subchapter A, Chapter 546, Transportation Code, by adding Section 546.0065, as follows:

Sec. 546.0065. AUTHORIZED EMERGENCY VEHICLES OF THE TEXAS DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT. Requires DPS to designate vehicles of the Texas Division of Emergency Management that may be operated as authorized emergency vehicles.

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2013.