

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

C.S.H.B. 3044  
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Transportation  
Committee Report (Substituted)

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

Every year, approximately 100 firefighters die while on duty in the United States and its protectorates. The leading cause of firefighter death is heart attack, accounting for 44 percent of all on-duty deaths and occurring disproportionately among experienced, seasoned firefighters over 40 years of age.

The inherent stresses of handling emergency incidents and the environmental dangers of extreme heat and humidity or extreme cold can adversely affect the health and safety of an emergency responder. When an emergency responder becomes fatigued, the responder's ability to react quickly and make critical decisions diminishes. As a result, a responder's ability to operate safely may be impaired. Rehabilitation on the incident scene is essential to prevent the occurrence of more serious conditions such as heat exhaustion or heat stroke. One way to address this issue is through emergency incident rehabilitation.

The Bexar County Emergency Scene Rehab deploys its volunteer responders, upon the request of other emergency response entities, to emergency scenes within a 12-county area, including Atascosa, Bandera, Bexar, Comal, Frio, Gillespie, Guadalupe, Karnes, Kendall, Kerr, Medina, and Wilson counties. This entity provides essential services to emergency responders, but depends on donated funds for operation. Relieving the burden of paying for license plates for response vehicles would aid the group in shifting those donated funds to their direct services. Currently, this entity is the only active public charity with a rehab focus in Texas.

C.S.H.B. 3044 defines "emergency incident rehabilitation" as providing emergency incident support services for emergency personnel, including firefighters, law enforcement personnel, and emergency medical technicians. The bill establishes that "emergency incident support services" include providing food, hydration, and shelter to emergency personnel, monitoring emergency personnel, and performing duties at the request of the person in charge of an emergency incident. The bill exempts vehicles used and owned exclusively for emergency incident rehabilitation by a nonprofit organization from the payment of the registration fee that would otherwise be required by law.

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

### **ANALYSIS**

C.S.H.B. 3044 amends the Transportation Code to provide that the owner of a motor vehicle, trailer, or semitrailer may apply for registration under provisions regarding license plates for exempt vehicles and is exempt from the payment of the registration fee that would otherwise be required if the vehicle is owned and used exclusively for emergency incident rehabilitation by a nonprofit organization. The bill defines "emergency incident rehabilitation" as the providing of emergency incident support services for emergency personnel, including firefighters, law

enforcement personnel, and emergency medical technicians. The bill requires an application for registration under the bill's provisions to include a statement by the owner of the vehicle that the vehicle is used exclusively for emergency incident rehabilitation and has not been used for any other purpose; a statement signed by an officer of the nonprofit organization that the vehicle has not been used for any purpose other than emergency incident rehabilitation and qualifies for registration under the bill's provisions; and a reasonable description of the vehicle and the equipment included in the vehicle. The bill requires the applicant to pay a fee of \$5. The bill requires a motor vehicle registered under these provisions to display the name of the organization that owns it on each front door, and to display at all times an appropriate license plate showing the vehicle's status. The bill prohibits a vehicle registered under the bill's provisions that is used for any purpose other than emergency incident rehabilitation by a nonprofit organization that provides emergency incident rehabilitation from being registered again under the bill by that organization. The bill defines "emergency incident support services."

### **EFFECTIVE DATE**

September 1, 2009.

### **COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE**

C.S.H.B. 3044 differs from the original by setting forth provisions regarding the use of vehicles for emergency incident rehabilitation, rather than for emergency scene rehabilitation as in the original. The substitute prohibits a registered emergency incident rehabilitation vehicle that is used for any purpose other than emergency incident rehabilitation by a nonprofit organization that provides emergency rehabilitation from being registered again as such by that organization, whereas the original prohibits a registered emergency scene rehabilitation vehicle that is used for any purpose other than emergency scene rehabilitation from being registered again as such.