

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 937
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State Affairs
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Currently, electric companies follow certain guidelines for power restoration after a hurricane or other natural disaster, prioritizing services vital to public safety. Hospitals, for instance, are required to be a priority for the purposes of power restoration. However, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and hospice care centers are not required to be a priority for these purposes even though these facilities provide medical care and some patients, particularly those in nursing homes, are reliant on medical equipment powered by electricity.

S.B. 937 seeks to address this situation by requiring an electric utility to give a nursing home, an assisted living facility, and a hospice care center the same priority that it gives to a hospital in the utility's emergency operations plan for restoring power after an extended power outage.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Public Utility Commission of Texas in SECTION 1 of this bill.

ANALYSIS

S.B. 937 amends the Utilities Code to require the Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUC) by rule to require an electric utility to give to a nursing facility, an assisted living facility, and a facility that provides hospice services the same priority that it gives to a hospital in the utility's emergency operations plan for restoring power after an extended power outage. The bill requires the PUC's rules to allow an electric utility to exercise the electric utility's discretion to prioritize power restoration for a facility after an extended power outage in accordance with the facility's needs and with the characteristics of the geographic area in which power must be restored.

S.B. 937 requires a municipally owned utility to report the emergency operations plan for restoring power to a nursing facility, an assisted living facility, and a facility that provides hospice services to the municipality's governing body or the body vested with the power to manage and operate the municipally owned utility. The bill requires an electric cooperative to report the emergency operations plan for restoring power to such facilities to the board of directors of the electric cooperative.

S.B. 937 provides for the meaning of "assisted living facility," "hospice services," and "nursing facility" by reference to the Health and Safety Code and provides for the meaning of "extended power outage" by reference to the Water Code.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2011.