

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 1591
By: Cortez
Homeland Security & Public Safety
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

By all accounts, the Texas Division of Emergency Management played a critical role in coordinating the emergency response of state agencies during the recent intense wildfire season in Texas. However, there is concern that vehicles operated by the division are not currently statutorily authorized to be used as emergency vehicles during a local or state disaster, which keeps emergency responders from using lights or sirens on the vehicles to gain immediate access to priority disaster areas. Interested parties note that the emergency management council is required to make recommendations to the Department of Public Safety as to which nationally recognized disaster relief organizations should be authorized to operate vehicles as designated emergency vehicles in the case of a disaster. In an effort to increase local emergency response and rescue and recovery efforts, H.B. 1591 includes certain vehicles operated by the division as authorized emergency vehicles.

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

H.B. 1591 amends the Transportation Code, for purposes of statutory provisions regarding the rules of the road, to require the Department of Public Safety to designate vehicles of the Texas Division of Emergency Management that may be operated as authorized emergency vehicles.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2013.