

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 1801
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Natural Resources
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

S.B. 1801 is designed to prevent wildfires in areas of the state with urban density that are particularly susceptible to threat from fire because of the area's forested nature and the impact of drought. The City of Westlake Hills in Travis County is an example of such an area.

In 2011, the City of Westlake Hills conducted a study to determine the water pressures and fire-flow rates for every fire hydrant located within the city. Several fire hydrants did not meet the required minimum specified by the International Fire Code. The International Fire Code requires a minimum of 1,000 gallons per minute at 20 pounds per square inch for emergencies and upward to 1,500 gallons per minute for emergencies at larger structures. The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) requires for existing water systems that fire hydrants have flow rates of at least 250 gallons per minute at 20 pounds per square inch pressure for a minimum of two hours for emergencies such as firefighting.

Under current law, municipalities like Westlake Hills are not authorized to enforce fire protection regulations if the local water system is not owned by the municipality. For purposes of wildfire prevention in a densely populated urban area, S.B. 1801 gives a municipality in an area designated to be a "wildland urban interface" the authority to require a fire hydrant to conform to flow and pressure standards determined necessary for fire suppression.

As proposed, S.B. 1801 amends current law relating to the adoption of fire hydrant requirements for a wildland-urban interface in certain municipalities.

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 Subtitle C, Title 9, Health and Safety Code, by adding Chapter 797, as follows:

CHAPTER 797. WILDFIRE PREVENTION

Sec. 797.001. DEFINITIONS. Defines "director," "wildfire," "wildland," and "wild-urban interface" in this chapter.

Sec. 797.002. FIRE HYDRANT REQUIREMENTS FOR WILDLAND-URBAN INTERFACE. (a) Provides that this section applies only to a municipality with a population of 2,500 or more that has within its boundaries a wildland-urban interface.

(b) Authorizes a governing body of a municipality to by ordinance require a fire hydrant located in that municipality to conform to flow and pressure standards established by the ordinance.

(c) Authorizes a municipality to consult with county and state fire prevention agencies in adopting standards under Subsection (b).

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