

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

S.B. 1917
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Intergovernmental Relations
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Enrolled

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

In Texas, county judges have responsibility for emergency preparedness and response within their local jurisdictions. These officials may appoint an emergency management coordinator to manage day-to-day program activities. Many Texas counties employ paid or volunteer emergency managers who may be highly trained in incident command and response but current statutes do not recognize emergency managers among those authorized to use lights and sirens.

Authorized emergency vehicles are defined in Section 541.201(1) of the Transportation Code, and various other statutes set out the requirements and privileges thereof. Section 418.001 (Short Title) of the Government Code designates the presiding officer of a county as the county's emergency management director, allows designation of an emergency management coordinator (Section 418.1015), and requires each county to maintain or participate in an emergency management program that serves as the first channel through which a municipal corporation or a joint board shall request assistance when its resources are exceeded (Section 418.102).

S.B. 1917 adds to Section 541.201(1) of the Transportation Code an additional definition stating that a private vehicle of an employee or volunteer of a county emergency management division in a county with a population of more than 46,500 and less than 48,000 that is designated as an authorized emergency vehicle by the commissioners court of that county.

Not all counties have the financial resources to own and/or lease emergency management vehicles, thus requiring an official of the office of emergency management (OEM) to use his or her privately-owned or privately-leased vehicle. S.B. 1917 allows an official of the Navarro County OEM, after acquiring authorization from the county judge and commissioners court, to use official OEM decals and lights/sirens on his or her private vehicle when responding to a county emergency.

S.B. 1917 amends current law relating to the definition of an authorized emergency vehicle.

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(1), Transportation Code, to redefine "authorized emergency vehicle" to include a public or private ambulance operated by a person who has been issued a license by the Department of State Health Services, rather than the Texas Department of Health; or a private vehicle of an employee or volunteer of a county emergency management division in a county with a population of more than 46,500 and less than 48,000 that is designated as an authorized emergency vehicle by the commissioners court of that county.

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