

By: Paul

H.B. No. 2320

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to services provided during and following a disaster.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Subchapter C, Chapter 418, Government Code, is amended by adding Sections 418.054, 418.055, and 418.056 to read as follows:

Sec. 418.054. COMMUNICATIONS IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING A DISASTER. The division, in collaboration with the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and other appropriate entities, shall to the extent practicable include private wireless communication, Internet, and cable service providers in the disaster planning process and determine the availability of the providers' portable satellite communications equipment and portable mobile telephone towers to assist in response and recovery immediately following disasters.

Sec. 418.055. HARDENING OF UTILITY FACILITIES AND CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE. (a) In this section, "critical infrastructure" includes hospitals and fire stations.

(b) The division shall identify methods for hardening utility facilities and critical infrastructure in order to maintain operations of essential services during disasters.

(c) The division shall, in collaboration with the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, the Public Utility Commission of Texas, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, and the Railroad

1 Commission of Texas:

2 (1) locate utility facilities and critical  
3 infrastructure in this state and determine methods for effectively  
4 reducing risks and impacts on those facilities and that  
5 infrastructure from a disaster; and

6 (2) encourage public and private entities that are  
7 responsible for utility facilities and critical infrastructure to  
8 implement the methods determined under Subdivision (1).

9 Sec. 418.056. REPORT ON BUILDING TRADE SERVICES FOLLOWING  
10 DISASTERS. (a) Not later than November 1, 2020, the division shall  
11 submit a report to members of the legislature on improving the  
12 oversight, accountability, and availability of building trade  
13 services following disasters. The report must include:

14 (1) strategies to increase the availability of  
15 tradespeople, including plumbers and electricians, following a  
16 disaster;

17 (2) approaches to increase prosecutions of alleged  
18 fraud related to building trade services offered following a  
19 disaster; and

20 (3) methods to encourage performance bond  
21 requirements in contracts for building trade services to be  
22 performed following a disaster.

23 (b) The division shall consult with appropriate state  
24 entities, including the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and  
25 Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation, local governments,  
26 trade associations, and law enforcement groups in preparing the  
27 report described by Subsection (a).

1        (c) This section expires January 1, 2021.

2        SECTION 2. Subchapter A, Chapter 17, Utilities Code, is  
3 amended by adding Section 17.010 to read as follows:

4        Sec. 17.010. DISASTER BILLING AWARENESS. The commission in  
5 cooperation with the Texas Division of Emergency Management shall:

6            (1) promote public awareness of bill payment  
7 assistance available during a disaster for electric, water, and  
8 wastewater services, including assistance for consumers on level  
9 billing plans; and

10           (2) provide the public with information about billing  
11 practices during a disaster to ensure that consumers of electric,  
12 water, and wastewater services have an adequate understanding of  
13 their rights.

14        SECTION 3. Not later than December 1, 2019, the Texas  
15 Division of Emergency Management and the Public Utility Commission  
16 of Texas shall begin the public awareness campaign required by  
17 Section 17.010, Utilities Code, as added by this Act.

18        SECTION 4. This Act takes effect September 1, 2019.