

**LEGISLATIVE BUDGET BOARD**  
**Austin, Texas**

**FISCAL NOTE, 89TH LEGISLATURE 1st CALLED SESSION 2025**

**August 5, 2025**

**TO:** Honorable Ken King, Chair, House Committee on Disaster Preparedness & Flooding, Select

**FROM:** Jerry McGinty, Director, Legislative Budget Board

**IN RE: HB1** by King (Relating to disaster response and preparedness, including required training for justices of the peace and responding to mass fatality events; requiring a license; authorizing a fee.), **As Introduced**

The fiscal implications of the bill cannot be determined due to costs related to administering the emergency manager licensing program and establishing a new mass fatality data management system, along with the amount of any offsetting revenue in the form of license fees, criminal history check fees, and gifts, grants, and donations, being unknown.

Among other provisions, the bill would require the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) to administer and enforce an emergency manager licensing program and would prohibit a person from being designated as an emergency management coordinator without holding such a license. The bill would authorize TDEM to adopt fees reasonable and necessary to cover the administration costs. The bill would establish the eligibility requirements for three tiers of an emergency manager license – basic, intermediate, and advanced – and would require TDEM to establish and maintain records of each license holder.

The bill would also require TDEM to establish and maintain a statewide volunteer registration and management database to register, credential, and manage individuals who volunteer to assist in disaster response or recovery operations at the direction and under the supervision of a state agency or local government. The bill would require TDEM and each state agency and local government that deploys volunteers in disaster response or recovery operations to use the system for certain actions. The bill would authorize TDEM to seek and accept gifts, grants, and donations to implement the database.

The bill would authorize TDEM to conduct a criminal history check on each emergency management license applicant and each person who applies to register as a volunteer. The bill would also authorize TDEM to require that each applicant and volunteer pay a fee to cover the costs associated with the check.

The bill would require the Department of State Health Services (DSHS), in collaboration with TDEM, to develop a training program for justices of the peace on managing mass fatality events.

The bill would also require DSHS, in collaboration with the regional advisory council of each trauma service area and TDEM, to establish a mass fatality operations rapid response team that immediately on the occurrence of a mass fatality event assesses the geographic area where the event occurred for certain purposes. The bill would provide for the integration of a mass fatality response team with search and rescue or recovery operations and family assistance centers.

Finally, the bill would require DSHS to develop and make available to state agencies and local governments that respond to mass fatality events a communications plan that meets certain criteria and to develop and maintain a centralized fatality tracking system for use when deploying a mass fatality operations response team.

DSHS indicates the need for a 1.0 full-time-equivalent (FTE) Emergency Management Program Coordinator III position for the development of the communications plan for state agencies and local governments. DSHS would coordinate with TDEM and other partners. Salaries, benefits, and related costs for the new FTE are

estimated to total \$130,718 in fiscal year 2026 and \$165,468 in fiscal year 2027. The lower cost in the first fiscal year is attributable to a later assumed start date for the new position in the year.

DSHS assumes some duties can be completed within existing resources. DSHS will coordinate with TDEM to develop a training program for justices of the peace. In addition, DSHS already has a mass fatality operations rapid response team, the Texas Mass Fatality Operations Response Team (TMORT), that is part of the Emergency Medical Task Force (EMTF). The team coordinates and has relationships with TDEM and regional advisory councils. TMORT is partially funded with federal funding. DSHS is responsible for activating and deploying the TMORT team for incidents. It is assumed that DSHS can continue to support this function, to facilitate immediate, early, and appropriate activation of mass fatality management resources and to ensure integration of the mass fatality operations response team with search and rescue or recovery operations.

It is assumed that DSHS would deploy and assist the TMORT team to coordinate with law enforcement agencies, fire departments, emergency medical services providers, search and rescue organizations, and others to meet the bill's requirement for integration of mass fatality operations with search and rescue or recovery operations. DSHS assumes that any costs to deploy these resources in an emergency event would be covered with response-specific funding.

DSHS currently uses a system, Pulsara, that is capable of doing the first three requirements in the bill: assigning a unique case number and incident tagging, tracking the chain-of-custody for a body and associated personal effects, and storing documentation of an autopsy and identification and release of a body. For the third requirement, medical examiners (MEs) do not currently have access to Pulsara, but DSHS could grant it, and MEs could load and store their reports in Pulsara. These can be done within the current cost of Pulsara. However, Pulsara cannot provide real-time status updates and notifications for close relatives of a victim of a mass fatality. Therefore, it is assumed that DSHS would have to develop a new system to meet all of the bill's requirements for the mass fatality data management system. DSHS is unable to estimate the cost of the new system.

TDEM indicates the need for \$808,333 in fiscal year 2026 and \$191,667 in fiscal year 2027 to cover operating expenses related to operating the statewide volunteer registration and management database, establishing additional training for justices of the peace, and setting up a framework for the training and instruction of emergency managers. The agency's estimate does not include out-year costs for conducting criminal history checks nor any costs related to administering the licensure of emergency managers.

According to the Comptroller of Public Accounts, the number of applicants for emergency manager licenses, the number of individuals who would register with the statewide volunteer and management database, and the fees that TDEM would charge are unknown; therefore, the revenue impact to the state cannot be estimated. The amount and timing of any gifts, grants, and donations that would be received is also unknown and cannot be estimated.

### **Local Government Impact**

No significant fiscal implication to units of local government is anticipated.

**Source Agencies:** 304 Comptroller of Public Accounts, 405 Department of Public Safety, 537 State Health Services, Department of, 575 Texas Division of Emergency Management, 710 Texas A&M University System Administrative and General Offices

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