

LEGISLATIVE BUDGET BOARD
Austin, Texas

FISCAL NOTE, 89TH LEGISLATURE 1st CALLED SESSION 2025

August 7, 2025

TO: Honorable Charles Perry, Chair, Senate Committee on Disaster Preparedness & Flooding, Select

FROM: Jerry McGinty, Director, Legislative Budget Board

IN RE: SB1 by Perry (Relating to disaster preparedness, response, and recovery; requiring a license; authorizing fees.), **As Introduced**

The fiscal implications of the bill cannot be determined due to costs related to administering the emergency manager licensing program and the small- and micro-business disaster recovery loan program, supervising emergency management drills, 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, for which the agency could adopt fees to cover administrative costs, and 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 for a state agency or local government. The bill would authorize TDEM to (1) seek and accept gifts, grants, and donations to implement the database, (2) conduct a criminal history check on each emergency management license applicant and each registering volunteer, and (3) require that each applicant and volunteer pay a fee to cover the costs associated with the check.

The bill would expand the applicability of required emergency management training and would establish back-up emergency management directors. The bill would require each local or interjurisdictional emergency management agency to annually conduct a drill on the agency's emergency management plan to be supervised by TDEM. The bill would also require a local or interjurisdictional emergency management agency for a disaster area to complete a post-disaster after-action report on a TDEM-prescribed form by a certain deadline.

The bill would consolidate the Small Business Disaster Recovery and the Micro-Business Disaster Recovery loan programs and would rename the General Revenue-Dedicated Account No. 5190 Micro-Business Recovery as the Small- and Micro-Business Recovery Account.

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 each trauma service area's regional advisory council and TDEM, to establish a mass fatality operations rapid response team that would be integrated with search and rescue or recovery operations and family assistance centers.

The bill would establish floodplain safety requirements for certain campground operators and would subject the Upper Guadalupe River Authority to a limited scope Sunset review. The bill would render an autopsy and inquest of death by a justice of the peace unnecessary under certain circumstances. Finally, the bill would establish a statewide meteorological data monitoring work group to develop a plan for implementing a statewide system of meteorological equipment to provide real-time information to state and local entities to inform emergency management decisions.

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 costs related to administering the licensure of emergency managers or supervising emergency management plan drills.

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 would expect federal reimbursement should there be a federal emergency declaration.

DSHS currently uses a system, Pulsara, that is capable of doing the first three requirements of the mass fatality data management system described 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.

This analysis assumes there would be an indeterminate cost to provide loans for the consolidated disaster recovery loan program that would be dependent on appropriations made for the program and loan applications received. According to the Comptroller, the number of small and micro businesses that would participate in the program is unknown; therefore, the revenue impact to the state from loans issued under the program cannot be estimated. The Comptroller also indicates that 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.

It is assumed that costs associated with the bill to the Department of Public Safety, the Texas Department of Transportation, the Texas Water Development Board, Texas Tech University, the University of Texas at Austin, and Texas A&M University could be absorbed using existing resources.

Local Government Impact

There could be costs to local and interjurisdictional agencies related to conducting an annual drill on the agency's emergency management plan and conducting post-disaster after-action reports as would be required by the bill.

Source Agencies: 300 Trusted Programs Within the Office of the Governor, 304 Comptroller of Public Accounts, 405 Department of Public Safety, 537 State Health Services, Department of, 575 Texas Division of Emergency Management, 580 Water Development Board, 601 Department of Transportation, 710 Texas A&M University System Administrative and General Offices, 768 Texas Tech University System Administration

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