

By: Bowers

H.B. No. 156

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the development and implementation of outdoor warning siren activation protocol, including the establishment of an advisory committee.

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

SECTION 1. Subchapter H, Chapter 418, Government Code, is amended by adding Sections 418.196 and 418.197 to read as follows:

Sec. 418.196. OUTDOOR WARNING SIREN ACTIVATION PROTOCOL.

(a) In this section:

(1) "Outdoor warning siren" means a device that produces a sound designed to alert members of the public who are outdoors of an imminent disaster and encourage those members to immediately seek shelter.

(2) "Political subdivision" means a municipality, a county, a special purpose district or authority, or any other political subdivision of this state.

(b) The division by rule shall develop an outdoor warning siren activation protocol to establish uniform criteria throughout this state for the activation of outdoor warning sirens by political subdivisions that operate outdoor warning sirens.

(c) The protocol must:

(1) include:

(A) criteria and thresholds for the voluntary or mandatory activation of the outdoor warning sirens in emergency circumstances, including in the event of:

(i) a warning issued by the National Weather Service, such as a flash flood, wildfire, or tornado warning; and

(ii) a declaration of local disaster issued under Section 418.108 involving an immediate threat to public safety, such as a shelter-in-place order or hazardous material incident; and

(B) guidance on the integration of the outdoor warning sirens with other public alert systems, such as the integrated public alert system operated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency; and

(2) accommodate regional differences in this state while maintaining consistency in emergency activation criteria and thresholds.

(d) The protocol may not regulate:

(1) testing schedules for the outdoor warning sirens;

(2) maintenance of the outdoor warning sirens; or

(3) minimum geographic coverage of the outdoor warning sirens.

(e) The division shall:

(1) publish the outdoor warning siren activation protocol on its publicly available Internet website; and

(2) provide notice to political subdivisions that operate outdoor warning sirens of any update to the protocol.

(f) A political subdivision operating outdoor warning sirens shall adopt and implement the outdoor warning siren activation protocol, as applicable.

Sec. 418.197. OUTDOOR WARNING SIREN ACTIVATION PROTOCOL ADVISORY COMMITTEE. (a) The division shall establish an outdoor warning siren activation protocol advisory committee to provide guidance on the development and implementation of the outdoor warning siren activation protocol.

(b) The committee is composed of the following members:

(1) a division designee, to serve as committee chair;

(2) one emergency management director or coordinator as designated under Section 418.1015 from each field response region of this state, as designated by the division, that operates outdoor warning sirens;

(3) a representative from the Emergency Management Association of Texas; and

(4) as available, a representative from the National Weather Service.

(c) The committee shall:

(1) provide technical guidance to the division on the operation of outdoor warning sirens in this state;

(2) provide insight on the regional, including geographical, differences in this state for purposes of operating outdoor warning sirens; and

(3) conduct an annual statewide survey of existing practices of political subdivisions in this state that operate outdoor warning sirens.

(d) The committee shall annually submit a report to the division containing a summary of recommendations based on the information collected under Subsection (c).

SECTION 2. (a) Not later than March 15, 2026, the Texas Division of Emergency Management by rule shall develop and publish the outdoor warning siren activation protocol, as required by Section 418.196, Government Code, as added by this Act.

(b) Not later than September 1, 2026, each political subdivision of this state that operates outdoor warning sirens shall adopt the outdoor warning siren activation protocol as required by Section 418.196, Government Code, as added by this Act.

(c) The outdoor warning siren activation protocol advisory committee, established under Section 418.197, Government Code, as

added by this Act, shall:

(1) not later than January 15, 2026, complete the initial statewide survey of political subdivisions operating outdoor warning sirens; and

(2) not later than February 1, 2026, submit recommendations regarding the outdoor warning siren activation protocol to the Texas Division of Emergency Management.

SECTION 3. This Act takes effect on the 91st day after the last day of the legislative session.