

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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C.S.H.B. 143
By: King et al. (Hancock)
Natural Resources
5/21/2025
Committee Report (Substituted)

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

In April 2024, the Texas House Investigative Committee on the Panhandle Wildfires heard three days of testimony regarding the more than one million acres that burned in the Texas Panhandle. In its report to the legislature, the committee made note of testimony indicating the need for the Railroad Commission of Texas (RRC) and the Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUC) to work cooperatively to ensure that safety concerns at oil and gas well sites were handled appropriately. Following the hearings, RRC and the PUC developed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) for the agencies to work together when a safety concern is noticed at a well site or surface facility. The MOU allowed the agencies to work cooperatively to ensure that electrical power lines that did not meet standards were addressed accordingly.

C.S.H.B. 143 codifies this MOU to ensure cooperation amongst agencies to address issues leading to wildfires.

C.S.H.B. 143 amends current law relating to the authority of the Railroad Commission of Texas and the Public Utility Commission of Texas to address a failure by an operator to maintain an electrical power line serving a well site or certain surface facilities in accordance with the National Electrical Code.

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 91.019, Natural Resources Code, as follows:

Sec. 91.019. STANDARDS FOR CONSTRUCTION, OPERATION, AND MAINTENANCE OF ELECTRICAL POWER LINES. (a) Creates this subsection from existing text. Requires an operator to construct, operate, and maintain:

- (1) creates this subdivision from existing text and makes a nonsubstantive change; and
 - (2) electrical power line poles in a manner that ensures the prevention and remediation of any readily observable deficiencies, including damage, deterioration, leaning, or cracking.
- (b) Requires a landowner or lessee, if the landowner or lessee discovers a condition involving an electrical power line, pole, or any other related electrical equipment that does not meet the standards described by Subsection (a), to provide written notice of the condition to the Railroad Commission of Texas (RRC).
- (c) Requires that RRC, if during an inspection by RRC of a well site or surface facility employed in operations incident to oil and gas development and production or on the receipt of a written notice submitted by a landowner or lessee

RRC discovers a readily observable condition involving an electrical power line, pole, or any other related electrical equipment that does not meet the standards described by Subsection (a) and poses a risk of causing a fire or injury to a person, not later than three days after the discovery of the condition, notify the Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUC) and the operator. Requires that the notification provided by RRC include a description of the condition and whether the well is abandoned.

(d) Requires RRC to notify the landowner of the condition and inform the landowner of the actions RRC and the PUC will take or have taken to resolve the condition not later than the 10th day after the date RRC discovers the condition or the 30th day after the date RRC discovers the condition, if RRC does not have the landowner's contact information at the time of the discovery.

(e) Requires RRC and the PUC, not later than the 10th day after the date on which RRC discovers the condition, to resolve the condition by:

(1) requesting that the state fire marshal or a local government authority inspect the condition at the well site or surface facility and requiring the operator to mitigate any dangerous conditions identified by the state fire marshal or local government authority;

(2) requesting that the electric cooperative, electric utility, or municipally owned utility that provides electric service to the well site or surface facility disconnect electric service to the well site or surface facility at the common coupling point at which the cooperative's or utility's equipment meets customer-owned equipment; or

(3) taking any other action RRC and the PUC consider necessary and appropriate to resolve the condition.

(f) Requires the electric cooperative, electric utility, or municipally owned utility, if electric service was disconnected pursuant to a request made under Subsection (e)(2), to restore electric service to the well site or surface facility on receipt of notice by RRC that the condition has been resolved.

(g) Authorizes members, employees, and agents of RRC to enter public or private property only as necessary for purposes of conducting an inspection under this section.

SECTION 2. Makes application of Section 91.019, Natural Resources Code, as amended by this Act, prospective.

SECTION 3. Effective date: September 1, 2025.