



Washington Fire Chiefs Legislative Report

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Legislative Session Update

The 2015 Legislature convened on Monday, January 12 for the 105-day session. A flurry of early action on fire-related bills has kept us all busy. Nearly 60 bills are already on the tracking list as of this writing, with plenty more expected in the coming weeks. For a complete list of fire service bills, position papers and other information see: [WFC Legislative Site](#). To view testimony live or recorded earlier go to [TVW](#) and search by bill number or committee that is hearing the bill.

Legislative Priority List

The 2015 WFC Legislative Top Five list:

- All-Risk Mobilization
 - [HB 1389](#) and [SB 5181](#) each received strong hearings in the policy committees (House Public Safety & Senate Government Operations), and both are moving on to the fiscal committees.
- Raise EMS levy cap to \$0.75/\$1,000 of A.V.
 - [HB 1251](#) received a hearing in the House Finance Committee on Jan 23. WFC testified in strong support. It is awaiting further action.
- Public records request compliance funding
 - [HB 1086](#) would establish a cost recovery mechanism for public records sought for commercial purposes. It received a hearing in the House State Gov Committee on Jan 20; WFC supported by signing in.
 - [HB 1684](#) was introduced on Jan 23 and would allow for cost recovery for electronic production of records per copy or per megabyte. A hearing is expected soon in the House Local Government Committee.

- Volunteer firefighter incentives
 - The WFC is working with other fire service groups to identify appropriate volunteer incentives and to develop a strategic plan for implementing those incentives, including possible legislation.
- Regional Fire Authority legislation
 - [HB 1368](#) is scheduled for public hearing in the House Local Government Committee on Jan 29. This bill would accomplish five things: (1) Allow existing RFAs to serve as a “participating jurisdiction” for the purposes of formation, allowing two existing RFAs to merge; (2) Allow for a simple majority for the renewal of an existing fire benefit charge (FBC) after imposition by a super majority of the voters, thus bringing RFAs in line with existing law for fire districts; (3) Allow the RFA planning committee to hold the public hearing on a proposed FBC if the FBC is part of the initial formation of the RFA (primarily a technical fix); (4) Allow for pro-rationing protection for the RFA above the \$5.90 like a fire district if the RFA is operating with the \$1.50 limit; and (5) Allow for protection of the 101% capacity should a FBC renewal fail, bringing RFAs in line with existing law for fire districts.
 - [HB 1606](#) and [SB 5537](#) would authorize regional cities to create a regional fire protection service authority. The State Council is taking the lead on this effort.

Other important issues:

- Washington GEMT Program
 - A bill is currently being developed by AP Triton and a day-long information and strategy meeting has been scheduled for Jan 28 at the WFC office in Olympia. A Senate sponsor for eventual legislation has already been identified.
- Funding to support the Fire Training Academy
 - The Governor’s proposed Capital Budget included \$13.7 million for the burn building replacement; \$900K for access road repairs; \$400K for communications (microwave tower); \$100K for predesign for balance of Phase I Master Plan Projects; and \$250K for emergency preservation and repair. The proposal did not include the \$3 million in predesign and design funds for Phase II of the Master Plan. The Capital Budget is currently being negotiated between the House and Senate leaders.
- Vehicle weight and length limits
 - [HB 1222](#) is scheduled of hearing in the House Transportation Committee on Jan 29
 - [SB 5457](#) is awaiting a public hearing in the Senate Transportation Committee.

- Biennial budget authority
 - [HB 1313](#) & [SB 5182](#) have each been introduced and are scheduled for hearings on Jan 28 and Jan 29 respectively.
- Rural amphitheater surcharge for EMS
 - [HB 1089](#) & [SB 5000](#) would allow for a rural amphitheater surcharge of up to \$1 per ticket to pay for EMS services. The bills each received hearings the first week of session and are awaiting further action. Local concerns may stall efforts in 2015.
- Occupational diseases
 - [HB 1602](#), allowing for certain prima facie presumptions for occupational diseases affecting emergency medical technicians, was introduced on Jan 23.
 - [HB 1603](#), allowing for certain prima facie presumptions for occupational diseases affecting public employee fire investigators, was introduced on Jan 23.
 - [HB 1604](#), requiring the department of labor and industries to convene a work group to discuss establishing definitions, policies, and procedures for mandatory reporting of hazardous exposures suffered in the course of employment by firefighters, was introduced on Jan 23.
- 10-year smoke alarms
 - A bill has been drafted and will be introduced soon to impose a point-of-sale prohibition starting in 2017 of any smoke alarm that is not a 10-year, tamper-resistant alarm.
- Community Paramedicine
 - [SB 5591](#) was introduced on Jan 23 and would allow emergency medical services to develop community assistance referral and education services programs. The bill is awaiting action in the Senate Government Operations Committee.
- Permanent fire benefit charge
 - [HB 1605](#) would amend the statutes governing fire benefit charges for fire districts and RFAs to allow for a ten-year or permanent fire benefit charge. The State Council is taking the lead on this effort. A hearing is expected soon.
- Basic firefighter training
 - [HB 1382](#) & [SB 5455](#) have been introduced addressing the delivery of basic firefighter training and testing. The Fire Commissioners Association is taking the lead on this effort, and these bills would require the director of fire protection to develop and adopt

a plan for the Washington state patrol fire training academy to deliver basic firefighter training and testing. Both bills are awaiting hearings.

- Marine and rail oil transportation issues
 - [SB 5057](#) received a hearing on Jan 15 and was the subject of a Work Session on Feb 22; WFC is monitoring the work on this bill, as well as two others ([HB 1449](#) & [SB 5087](#)).
- Banning toxic flame retardants
 - [HB 1174](#) received a hearing in the House Environment Committee on Jan 19; the WA Fire Marshal's Association testified in support.
 - [SB 5056](#) also deals with toxic chemicals, but is not being supported by proponents of HB 1174; WFC signed in with concerns during the hearing on Jan 22.
- State Building Code Council
 - A number of bills have been introduced that touch on various codes and the authority of the State Building Code Council, including efforts to move to a six-year code cycle ([SB 5185](#)), and efforts to modify regulations on buildings four stories and higher ([SB 5139](#)).
- Ambulance billing/payment patients
 - The WFC has been in contact with insurance representatives to discuss the ongoing issue of certain insurance companies issuing payment directly to the patient rather than the service provider for ambulance transportation. While most companies in most instances pay the provider, there are some instances in which this is not the case. It is possible that this is due to federal regulations, however, and we are investigating whether that is the case and, if so, how best to proceed on the issue.