**All Risk Fire Mobilization history and need**

In 1991, a wildland fire in Spokane destroyed hundreds of residential structures and thousands of acres of forest. In the wake of that firestorm, the 1992 Washington State Legislature passed into law a bill directing the creation of the State Fire Service Mobilization Plan in [RCW 43.43.961](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=43.43.961).

This RCW names the Chief of the Washington State Patrol as the authority to authorize a state-declared mobilization.

Under [RCW 43.43.961](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=43.43.961), the Fire Service Resource Mobilization Plan is implemented to provide personnel, equipment, and other logistical resources from around the state when a wildland fire or other emergency exceeds the firefighting capacity of local jurisdictions.

In accordance with this plan, the Washington State Patrol Fire Protection Bureau Office of the State Fire Marshal coordinates statewide fire service resources to support local firefighting efforts.

**Rapid Deployment of Necessary Emergency Responders**

Services provided by local fire departments/districts vary throughout the State, but the majority provides a minimum of fire suppression, emergency medical, and rescue response capabilities. A large number of fire departments/districts also provide hazardous materials and technical rescue response as well. All of these services may be needed for responses to large earthquakes, floods, mud slides, terrorist attacks, large industrial accidents, and other natural or manmade disasters.

Once a mobilization is approved, a well exercised process is initiated to request and deploy resources. The organizational process allows for requested resources to be on the road and moving toward the incident within two hours of receiving the request.

This rapid movement allows resources to arrive on scene soon enough in the incident to make a substantial impact. Two (2) hours plus travel time from time of notification to being at the incident means with few exceptions there would be substantial help at an event within six hours or less anywhere in the State. This is early enough to save lives in collapsed buildings and other events, as opposed to arriving days later via other emergency management processes.

**Your Support is Needed to Provide This Response Capability**

Recently, an Assistant Attorney General Opinion was prepared that reinterpreted the governing RCW regarding state fire service mobilization. This opinion stated that the governing RCW should be interpreted to limit state mobilization to only incidents directly involving fire. This interpretation defeats the purpose of state fire service mobilization and would eliminate coordinated response of the various local fire districts to such disasters as floods, earthquakes, rescues, and pandemics.

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| --- | --- |
| ***RCW 43.43.961***  ***State fire service mobilization — Legislative declaration and intent.*** |  |

*Because of the possibility of the occurrence of disastrous fires or other disasters of unprecedented size and destructiveness, the need to insure that the state is adequately prepared to respond to such a fire or disaster, the need to establish a mechanism and a procedure to provide for reimbursement to state agencies and local firefighting agencies that respond to help others in time of need or to a host fire district that experiences expenses beyond the resources of the fire district, and generally to protect the public peace, health, safety, lives, and property of the people of Washington, it is hereby declared necessary to:  
  
     (1) Provide the policy and organizational structure for large scale mobilization of firefighting resources in the state through creation of the Washington state fire services mobilization plan;  
  
     (2) Confer upon the chief the powers provided herein;  
  
     (3) Provide a means for reimbursement to state agencies and local fire jurisdictions that incur expenses when mobilized by the chief under the Washington state fire services mobilization plan; and  
  
     (4) Provide for reimbursement of the host fire department or fire protection district when it has: (a) Exhausted all of its resources; and (b) invoked its local mutual aid network and exhausted those resources. Upon implementation of state fire mobilization, the host district resources shall become state fire mobilization resources consistent with the fire mobilization plan.  
  
     It is the intent of the legislature that mutual aid and other interlocal agreements providing for enhanced emergency response be encouraged as essential to the public peace, safety, health, and welfare, and for the protection of the lives and property of the people of the state of Washington. If possible, mutual aid agreements should be without stated limitations as to resources available, time, or area. Nothing in this chapter shall be construed or interpreted to limit the eligibility of any nonhost fire protection authority for reimbursement of expenses incurred in providing firefighting resources for mobilization.*

The issue was brought before the State Legislature during the 2014 legislative session. The Bill was supported by the Washington Fire Chiefs and the Washington Fire Commissioners Associations.

The Bills did not make it to the floor to a vote, due to the concerns about funding a potential response. The Fiscal Note accompanying the Bills stated:

*There are no program expenditures associated with this bill; however there could be infrequent but significant fiscal impact to the Disaster Response Account as a result of additional mobilizations under the new definition. The previous non-fire mobilizations resulted in expenditures of $1,386,000 for the World Trade Organization riots and $232,693 for the Rosalia Motorcycle Run.*

*The Disaster Response Account currently receives an $8 million fund transfer from the General Fund per biennium for emergency fire mobilizations. If the WSP’s expenditures for fire mobilizations exceed its $8 million appropriation from the Disaster Response Account, supplemental funding (GF-State funds) is requested through the legislative process.*

*The Washington State Patrol assumed responsibility for management of the Fire Mobe Response in the 2003-2005 biennium, and in that time additional funding has been required in four biennia. We could exceed our $8 million appropriation more frequently if there are more non-fire mobilizations. This would require us to request additional General Funds to support mobilization costs. It is difficult to estimate these potential costs because of the limited experience with non-fire mobilization events.*

The inability to estimate the cost of non-fire disaster response was given as a reason to not move the bills to the floor.

The need for a non-fire related disaster response using All Risk Fire Mobilization could occur tomorrow (as it did in Oso) or it could not happen for several years. But if the need were to occur in the near future, wouldn’t it be smart to have the ability to respond?

**We ask that you:**

1. Adopt a resolution supporting All Risk Fire Mobilization
2. Lobby your State Representatives to support All Risk Fire Mobilization
3. Encourage your Emergency Managers to follow this important issue

**Process for declaring or requesting a Mobilization with financial controls**

Only the Fire Chief of the local fire protection jurisdiction or fire chief's authorized representative has the authority to request state fire services resource Mobilization.

A request for State Mobilization may occur when the Fire Chief has expended or will expend all available:

* Local resources
* Mutual aid resources
* If a special resource is needed (trench rescue unit) and is not available through existing mutual aid agreements, this may be an extenuating circumstance where mutual aid has been exhausted without having a response. This would be reviewed on a case by case basis.
* And agrees to comply with provisions of the Washington State Fire Services Resource Mobilization Plan

<http://www.wsp.wa.gov/fire/mobilization.htm>

**Incident on land protected by a local fire jurisdiction**

* Local fire department/district respond to the incident engaging in initial attack
* Incident grows in size; mutual aid is requested from surrounding jurisdictions

**Local & Mutual Aid Resources Exhausted**

* Local fire chief determines additional resources are needed to control the incident

**Local fire chief initiates request for Fire Mobilization**

* Contacts the Fire Defense Committee (FCC) Regional Coordinator and identifies the type and quantity of resources needed
* Completes Mobilization Request Form
* Completes Incident Complexity Analysis Form

**Fire Mobilization request sent to the State EMD Duty Officer**

* EMD forward the request to the SFMO Mobe Coordinator (MC)
* Request validated
* MC contacts the Chief of the WSP with the request

**Chief of WSP approves request per RCW 43.43**

* SFMO assigns personnel to manage resource ordering and tracking incident costs

**SFMO Mobilization Coordinator obtains fire service resources**

* Fire service resources are ordered from Fire Defense Regions
* Additional wildland resource including contract resources can be ordered through DNR

**Incident Management Team & Mobilization Resources Arrive**

* IMT identifies the local initial attack resources (includes local fire district resource & contract resources)
* Develop Incident Action Plan

**Incident Management Team takes control of the incident with a signed Delegation of Authority from the local jurisdiction**

* IMT to release initial attack resources within 12-36 hours of taking control

If you have any questions, would like further discussion, or arrange for a presentation, please don’t hesitate to contact me.

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**Mobilization of “All Risk Resources” During an Emergency**

**2014 Legislative Discussion**

**Background**

Under [RCW 43.43.961](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=43.43.961), the Fire Service Resource Mobilization Plan is implemented to provide personnel, equipment, and other logistical resources from around the state when a wildland fire **or other emergency** exceeds the firefighting capacity of local jurisdictions. The types of emergencies that may require state mobilization include **wildland fires, earthquakes, floods, spread of contagious disease**, and other disasters that local districts are unable to fully handle on their own.

**Identified Problem**

Recently, an Assistant Attorney General Opinion was prepared that reinterpreted the governing RCW regarding state fire service mobilization. This opinion stated that the governing RCW should be interpreted to limit state mobilization to only incidents directly involving fire. This interpretation defeats the purpose of state fire service mobilization and would eliminate coordinated response of the various local fire districts to such disasters as floods, earthquakes, rescues, and pandemics.

**Purpose of Legislation**

This bill would remedy this dangerously narrow interpretation by codifying existing practice with respect to state mobilization, and does so without expanding the use of mobilization for purposes other than those already identified in both state and federal disaster response policies, including “other disasters of unprecedented size,” as outlined in RCW 43.43.961.

**Support of the State Patrol**

WFC has worked closely with the Washington State Patrol to create language that all parties support. The bill ensures that all mobilization requests will meet with the state Fire Mobilization Plan, while allowing the originally intended use of fire resources in much-needed emergency settings.

For further information, please contact:

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**The Washington Fire Chiefs Association urges your support of this important legislation.**