

Emergency Preparedness



Disaster and Emergency Preparedness

County and local fairgrounds provided emergency shelter to Oregonians during the 2020 wildfire season. Two measures to bolster fairground infrastructure were considered this session. [Senate Bill 894 A](#) (*not enacted*) would have required the issuance of \$20.1 million in bonds to support the Oregon State Fair and Exposition Center's use as a regional emergency and evacuee center. [House Bill 2948 A](#) (*not enacted*) would have required the Oregon Department of Emergency Management to develop a grant program for infrastructure improvements at fairgrounds used as emergency evacuation sites.

[House Bill 3486](#) (*not enacted*) would have required newly constructed large rooms (at least 6,000 square feet of gross area) in schools or community colleges of high seismic activity to be designed as earthquake relief shelters. Design standards would include seismic separation, emergency power, emergency water supply, and natural gas shutoff lines.

Several measures for increased funding for disaster and emergency preparedness were also considered. [House Bill 2873 A](#) (*not enacted*) would have authorized \$10 million in bonds for deposit into the Oregon Department of Emergency Management's Resiliency Grant Fund ([ORS 401.552](#), 2021). [House Bill 3484 A](#) (*not enacted*) would have established the State Fire Marshal Mobilization Fund to pay for emergency mobilization and pre-positioning activities for fire response. [House Bill 3282](#) (*not enacted*) would have authorized \$3 million in General Funds to the City of Gold Beach to

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See the 2023 **Legislative Summary Report** for [Emergency Preparedness](#) which highlights policy measures that received a public hearing during Oregon's 2023 Regular Legislative Session.

relocate the city's firefighting facilities and equipment from their tsunami inundation zone.

Disaster and Emergency Response

The Oregon Department of Emergency Management (ODEM) is tasked with maintaining and coordinating statewide services for emergencies and disasters, and several measures were considered this session related to departmental activities. [House Bill 3059](#) creates the Oregon Disaster Response Assistance Matching Fund, which will be used as federal matching funds for disaster response and grants to local governments to assist or support disaster response efforts. The measure also creates a new compliance division within ODEM to ensure the department follows federal

regulations, establishes monitoring and reporting requirements, identifies compliance risks, and serves as a liaison between the department and federal officials. The measure also requires the department to provide technical assistance to local private and public entities that are active in emergency preparedness or response in fundraising, organizational capacity, navigating political relationships, interacting with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and culturally specific outreach.

[Senate Bill 962 A](#) (*not enacted*) would have directed ODEM to develop and implement a grant program to distribute money to certain counties to fund emergency preparedness coordinators. [House Bill 2854 A](#) (*not enacted*) would have created two new accounts under the department to address unmet needs during and after state-declared emergencies including the Oregon Public Assistance Grant Account for public and private entities, and the Oregon Individual Assistance Grant Account for households and individuals.

[House Bill 3059](#) requires the Legislative Revenue Office to conduct a study of potential means of granting a tax benefit to emergency management volunteers and provides for paid leave for public employees volunteering to respond to disaster relief or recovery services.

The Oregon Public Utility Commission regulates investor-owned electric and natural gas utilities to ensure they offer safe and reliable energy at reasonable rates. [House Bill 3143](#) authorizes a public utility, upon approval by the commission, to issue bonds and securitize debt for costs and expenditures incurred that are associated with events subject to a federal or state declaration of emergency.

The Salvage Chief (LSM380) was constructed during World War II as a shallow-draft landing craft with bow ramps. Following the war, it returned to the west coast and was decommissioned. Now efforts are underway to reconvert the Salvage Chief to active duty to

help with response in the event of an earthquake and/or tsunami. [Senate Bill 200 A](#) (*not enacted*) would have appropriated \$3 million from the General Fund to the Oregon Department of Administrative Services for distribution to the Salvage Chief Foundation for repairs and upgrades to the salvage vessel.

Emergency Coordination and Communication

[House Bill 2927](#) (2021) elevated and reorganized the Office of the State Fire Marshal to the Department of the State Fire Marshal beginning July 1, 2023. [House Bill 3485](#) adds additional discretionary powers to the new department including the authority to establish headquarters and regional offices and to own and operate emergency response vehicles. It also provides for standardized uniforms, response apparatus, vehicles, and equipment to carry out the duties of the department.

[House Bill 2484](#) directs the department to oversee the state's statewide urban search and rescue functions, and [House Bill 2522](#) instructs the department to establish and appoint a Rural Structural Fire Protection Review Committee to review statutes and develop recommendations to improve rural fire protection districts.

Public testimony during the 2023 session documented recent examples of drone interference on local emergency management and response efforts. [House Bill 2520](#) creates a Class A violation for reckless interference with an aircraft if a person is recklessly, knowingly, or intentionally using drones to interfere with wildfire suppression, law enforcement, or emergency response efforts.

The National Suicide Prevention Hotline transitioned to a three-digit number in 2022 and now dialing 9-8-8 from any phone in the country will connect you to trained suicide and crisis response staff. Existing statutes require 9-8-8 suicide and crisis center hotlines establish



policies and training staff to provide specialized and culturally competent support to specific high-risk populations such as veterans and rural Oregonians with co-occurring disorders, [House Bill 3426](#) adds firefighters and other first responders to that high-risk definition.

Other measures considered this session related to emergency communications include [House Bill 2508](#) (*not enacted*) which would have directed the Department of Emergency Management to develop and administer a grant program to consolidate, modernize, or upgrade 9-1-1 call centers. [House Bill 2764 B](#) (*not enacted*) would have established the Missing Endangered Person Alert System.

emergency disaster declaration. [Senate Bill 443](#) (*not enacted*) would have required electric companies to reimburse qualified customers up to \$250 for the purchase price of a backup power source when power shutoff is likely to occur and last for eight or more hours.

Recovery Efforts

In response to the 2020 wildfires, the Legislative Assembly enacted [House Bill 2809](#) (2021), which temporarily allows a recreational vehicle to sit on single-family or manufactured home lot made uninhabitable by a natural disaster for up to 24 months. [House Bill 2898](#) extends the time allowance for living in an on-site RV to five years and, if the property owner is under application to alter, restore, or replace a dwelling destroyed by the 2020 wildfires, they may occupy an RV until December 30, 2030.

Other recovery measures considered this session include [House Bill 2812](#) which allows a reduction in state taxes for personal casualty loss incurred from an event subject to a state

Staff

Patrick Brennan, Legislative Analyst

Beverly Schoonover, Legislative Analyst

Legislative Policy and Research Office

Oregon State Capitol | (503) 986-1813 | www.oregonlegislature.gov/lpro

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