

BILL SUMMARY

“An act relating to natural disaster government response, recovery, and resiliency”

Purpose: This bill proposes to . . .

- Create the Community Resilience and Disaster Mitigation Grant Program and the Community Resilience and Disaster Mitigation Fund.
- Increase the assessment on certain insurance company premiums for the Community Resilience and Disaster Mitigation Fund.
- Define emergency management personnel and require local emergency management organizations and local emergency planning committees to incorporate information regarding the utilization of emergency management personnel into emergency management plans.
- Modify authority for utilities to assess stormwater rates and establish a grant program for joint municipal stormwater utility operations.
- Require the Vermont Emergency Management Division to conduct an assessment of the State’s disaster preparedness, report the findings, and provide a disaster preparedness improvement plan if necessary.
- Authorize the Department of Public Safety to create the Vermont Search and Rescue Team to provide for the rapid response of trained professionals to emergencies and other hazards occurring in the State.
- Require Vermont 211 to keep confidential any personal information acquired from victims of natural disasters except for coordinating relief work for affected individuals.
- Require the Division of Vermont Emergency Management to publish best management practices for rebuilding after emergencies.
- Require the E-911 Board to create a policy making E-911 and VT-Alerts more responsive in large emergencies.
- Require the Division of Vermont Emergency Management to implement best management practices for the placement and funding of local emergency shelters.
- Create a Chief Climate Resilience Officer in the Department of Public Safety.

Part 1. Creation of the Community Resilience and Disaster Mitigation Fund (Secs. 1-4)

This bill incorporates all sections of [S.145](#) (an act relating to the Community Resilience and Disaster Mitigation Fund), except for the findings. These sections create a Community Resilience and Disaster Mitigation Grant Program, administered by the Department of Public Safety, funded by an annual assessment of \$4,300,000 on insurance companies writing disaster-related policies, and to award grants for municipal disaster mitigation projects.

Part 2. Emergency Management Personnel (Secs. 5-7)

This bill incorporates all sections of [S.250](#) (an act relating to emergency management personnel). These sections create a definition of “emergency management personnel” to include public works personnel, who will be treated akin to traditional emergency-oriented professions, like firefighters and police, for the purposes of emergency response.

Part 3. Municipal Stormwater Utilities (Secs. 8-10)

This bill incorporates elements of [S.243](#) (an act relating to the formation of stormwater utility districts). These sections modify how stormwater rates are assessed and how the associated revenue may be used. Sewage system commissioners may now set stormwater rates for equivalent residential units based on an average area of impervious surface on residential property within the municipality. Revenues may be used for stormwater management, control, and treatment; flood resiliency; floodplain restoration; and other similar measures. These sections also permit municipalities to jointly apply for grants from the Agency of Natural Resources to support stormwater utility operations.

Part 4. Assessment of the Vermont Emergency Management Division's Disaster Preparedness (Sec. 11)

This bill incorporates all of [S. 223](#) (an act relating to the assessment of the Vermont Emergency Management Division's disaster preparedness). This one section requires the Vermont Emergency Management Division to assess the adequacy of (1) early warning and evacuation orders; (2) designated evacuation routes and emergency shelters; (3) the present system of local emergency management directors in wide-spread emergencies; and (4) the State's present emergency communications systems. The Division will submit a written report by January 25, 2025.

Part 5. Creation of the Vermont Search and Rescue Team (Sec. 12)

This bill incorporates Sec. 6 of [H.627](#) (an act relating to emergency preparedness and hazard response). This section will create the Vermont Search and Rescue Team within the Department of Public Safety.

Part 6. Vermont-211 Information Privacy (Sec. 13)

This section requires Vermont 211 to keep confidential any personal information acquired from victims of natural disasters except for coordinating relief work for affected individuals.

Part 7. Best Management Practices for Rebuilding after Emergency (Secs. 14-16)

This bill incorporates Secs. 14, 15, and 18 of [H.723](#) (an act relating to flood recovery). These sections will require the Vermont Emergency Management Division to publish best management practices for rebuilding after emergencies, and for the Enhanced E-911 Board to develop a policy using E-911 to provide more effective VT-Alerts in large emergencies. These also require the Vermont Emergency Management Division to implement best management practices for the placement and funding of local emergency shelters.

Part 8. Creation of Chief Climate Resilience Officer (Sec. 17)

This section creates a Chief Climate Resilience Officer in the Department of Public Safety.

Part 9. Effective Date (Sec. 18).

This act shall take effect on passage.