

1 H.935

2 An act relating to emergency management

3 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

4 * * * Ready Response Grant Program * * *

5 Sec. 1. 20 V.S.A. § 52 is added to read:

6 § 52. READY RESPONSE GRANT PROGRAM

7 (a) As used in this section, “ready response” means the provision of short-
8 term food and bottled water resources, including logistical support and
9 transportation, to individuals in Vermont who do not have adequate access to
10 food and water at agreed upon times when the Division of Emergency
11 Management seeks resource assistance from a grantee or responds to an all-
12 hazards event or state of emergency.

13 (b) There is created the Ready Response Grant Program to be managed and
14 administered by the Division of Emergency Management. The Division shall
15 award an annual grant to an eligible food bank to source, store, and distribute
16 shelf-stable, ready-to-eat foods and bottled water at times and in types and
17 quantities per a written memorandum of agreement with the Division.

18 (c) The grant shall be in an amount sufficient to compensate the grantee for
19 all costs incurred to procure and stage food and water in agreed upon quantities
20 and locations, the costs of cycling the food and water at agreed-upon intervals,
21 the value of distribution center storage capacity, the value of operational

1 capacity to stage materials in anticipation of need, and the costs of distribution
2 whenever the Division seeks resource assistance from the grantee or responds
3 to an all-hazards event or state of emergency. As used in this subsection, the
4 “value of operational capacity” includes leased storage space, delivery
5 vehicles, drivers, warehouse selectors, and other operational costs.

6 (d) Food and water supplies subject to a grant and under the grantee’s
7 control shall be rotated and replenished according to established industry
8 guidelines and best practices. Rotated food and water shall be redistributed in
9 an equitable manner by the grantee through Vermont’s charitable food system
10 to Vermont nonprofit organizations qualifying under 26 U.S.C. § 501(c)(3) that
11 provide food to individuals in Vermont.

12 (e) To the extent that the Division requests services from the grantee that
13 are not covered by the Grant Program, a separate agreement shall be reached
14 between the Division and the grantee.

15 * * * Technical Rescue Grant Program * * *

16 Sec. 2. 20 V.S.A. § 53 is added to read:

17 § 53. TECHNICAL RESCUE GRANT PROGRAM

18 (a) Creation of Program. There is created the Technical Rescue Grant
19 Program to assist Vermont fire departments, emergency medical services
20 agencies, and technical rescue agencies with the improvement of operational
21 readiness and investment in specialized equipment, personal protective gear,

1 and training. The Program shall be administered by the Department of Public
2 Safety.

3 (b) Working Group. The Technical Rescue Grant Working Group is
4 established to review applications and recommend awards to the
5 Commissioner of Public Safety. The Working Group shall be composed of the
6 following members:

7 (1) the Manager of the Vermont Urban Search and Rescue Team;

8 (2) one member of the Senate Committee on Government Operations,
9 appointed by the Committee on Committees;

10 (3) one member of the House Committee on Government Operations
11 and Military Affairs, appointed by the Speaker of the House;

12 (4) a representative of a fire department, appointed by the Commissioner
13 of Public Safety; and

14 (5) a representative of an emergency medical services agency, appointed
15 by the Commissioner of Health.

16 (c) Meetings. The Manager of the Vermont Urban Search and Rescue
17 Team shall call the first meeting of the Working Group. At its first meeting,
18 the Working Group shall elect a chair and a vice chair. The Working Group
19 shall adopt procedures to govern its proceedings.

1 (d) Compensation and reimbursement.

2 (1) For attendance at meetings during adjournment of the General
3 Assembly, a legislative member of the Working Group shall be entitled to per
4 diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses pursuant to 2 V.S.A. § 23.
5 These payments shall be made from monies appropriated to the General
6 Assembly.

7 (2) Other members of the Working Group whose participation is not
8 supported through their employment or association shall receive per diem
9 compensation pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 1010 and reimbursement of travel
10 expenses. A per diem authorized by this subdivision shall be paid from the
11 budget of the Department of Public Safety.

12 (e) Eligibility. Fire departments, emergency medical services agencies, and
13 technical rescue agencies operating within Vermont shall be eligible for
14 Program grants. Grant applicants shall demonstrate their use, planned use, or
15 need for technical rescue operations within their service area. All grant
16 applicants shall submit their application on a form adopted by the Department.
17 The Department shall prioritize grant awards for applicants that:

18 (1) maintain a memorandum of understanding with the Division of
19 Emergency Management for swiftwater rescue; or

20 (2) function as regional technical rescue teams providing services in
21 multiple jurisdictions.

1 (f) Grant award limitations. The maximum award to any applicant in a
2 given fiscal year shall be not more than \$5,000.00. The Program shall not
3 award more than \$25,000.00 in total grants in a given fiscal year.

4 (g) Application review and scoring. The Department shall adopt
5 procedures governing application submission, forms, review, scoring, and
6 recommendation of awards. The procedures for application scoring shall
7 include alignment with the Program priorities in subsection (a) of this section,
8 operational need, geographic service area, feasibility of the proposed project,
9 cost-effectiveness, and sustainability of the applicant's services.

10 (h) Grant recipient reporting; Department report. Each grant recipient shall
11 submit to the Department a final expenditure report, proof of purchase or
12 training completion, and a narrative description of how the grant improved the
13 recipient's technical rescue capacity. Annually on or before November 15, the
14 Department shall submit a written report to the House Committee on
15 Government Operations and Military Affairs and the Senate Committee on
16 Government Operations summarizing grant awards, outcomes, and Program
17 recommendations.

18 (i) Rulemaking. The Department may adopt rules pursuant to 3 V.S.A.
19 chapter 25 as needed to implement this section.

1 Sec. 5. 20 V.S.A. § 32 is amended to read:

2 § 32. LOCAL EMERGENCY PLANNING COMMITTEES; CREATION;
3 DUTIES

4 * * *

5 (b) All local emergency planning committees shall include representatives
6 from the following: fire departments; local and regional emergency medical
7 services; local, county, and State law enforcement; other entities providing first
8 responders or emergency management personnel; organizations serving
9 vulnerable populations; media; transportation; regional planning commissions;
10 hospitals; industry; the Vermont National Guard; the Department of Health's
11 district office; and an animal rescue organization, and may include any other
12 interested public or private individual or organization. Where the local
13 emergency planning committee represents more than one region of the State,
14 the Commission shall appoint representatives that are geographically diverse.

15 (c) A local emergency planning committee shall perform all the following
16 duties:

17 (1) Carry out all the requirements of a committee pursuant to EPCRA,
18 including preparing a local emergency planning committee plan. The plan
19 shall be coordinated with the State ~~emergency management plan~~ Emergency
20 Management Plan and may be expanded to address all-hazards identified in the
21 State ~~emergency management plan~~ Emergency Management Plan. A local

1 emergency planning committee shall coordinate with disability-led
2 organizations throughout all phases of emergency management planning. At a
3 minimum, the local emergency planning committee plan shall include the
4 following:

5 * * *

6 Sec. 6. 20 V.S.A. § 51 is amended to read:

7 § 51. DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT; ALL-HAZARD
8 AND WEATHER ALERT SYSTEMS FOR MUNICIPAL
9 CORPORATIONS

10 (a) Upon request of a municipal corporation, the Division of Emergency
11 Management shall assist the municipal corporation with access to the
12 following:

13 (1) a statewide river observation and modeling system that details
14 current river level observations and models river flood outlooks; and

15 (2) a statewide enhanced weather forecasting and alert system that:

16 (A) predicts local and regional conditions using advanced modeling;

17 and

18 (B) issues real-time warnings for potentially dangerous weather
19 through multiple communication channels.

20 (b) Any all-hazard or weather alert systems used by a municipal
21 corporation pursuant to subdivision (a)(2)(B) of this section shall, if feasible,

1 include communication channels that are accessible by individuals with
2 disabilities.

3 * * * Town Forest Fire Wardens * * *

4 Sec. 7. 10 V.S.A. § 2603 is amended to read:

5 § 2603. POWERS AND DUTIES: COMMISSIONER

6 * * *

7 (d) The Commissioner or designee shall be the State ~~fire warden~~ Forest
8 Fire Warden and may act as, and in place of, the town forest fire warden of any
9 municipality, unorganized town, or gore as provided under subchapter 4 of this
10 chapter. The Commissioner or designee, as State Forest Fire Warden, shall
11 have the authority to:

12 (1) exercise the authority and duties of a town forest fire warden as set
13 forth in subchapter 4 of this chapter;

14 (2) appoint special forest fire wardens and delegate the authority of the
15 State Forest Fire Warden to the special forest fire wardens;

16 (3) take command and control of a forest fire in any municipality or
17 unorganized town or gore in the State when, in the State Forest Fire Warden's
18 determination, it is necessary to do so, or when resources are needed in
19 addition to local resources, and act as incident commander over all other fire
20 officials;

1 ~~of the selectboard. A warden shall comply with training requirements~~
2 ~~established by the Commissioner. The chief of the fire department, fire~~
3 ~~district, or private fire department with the jurisdictional responsibility to~~
4 ~~respond to a municipality, unorganized town, or gore is designated as the town~~
5 ~~forest fire warden and shall have the authority to exercise all the powers and~~
6 ~~duties of a town forest fire warden. For any municipality, unorganized town,~~
7 ~~or gore that is covered by two or more fire districts or has two or more fire~~
8 ~~departments, the municipality, unorganized town, or gore shall designate one~~
9 ~~fire chief as town forest fire warden and shall notify the Commissioner of the~~
10 ~~designation.~~

11 (b) ~~The Commissioner may appoint a forest fire warden for an unorganized~~
12 ~~town or gore, who shall serve for a term of five years or until a successor is~~
13 ~~appointed. An appointed forest fire warden for an unorganized town or gore~~
14 ~~may be reappointed for successive five-year terms by the Commissioner until~~
15 ~~the Commissioner appoints and the unorganized town or gore approves a~~
16 ~~successor. The warden may be removed for cause at any time by the~~
17 ~~Commissioner with the approval of the unorganized town or gore. The forest~~
18 ~~fire warden of an unorganized town or gore shall have the same powers and~~
19 ~~duties as town forest fire wardens and shall be subject to the requirements of~~
20 ~~this subchapter. The chief of the fire department, fire district, or private fire~~
21 ~~department with the jurisdictional responsibility to respond to a municipality,~~

1 unorganized town, or gore, as town forest fire warden, may designate deputy
2 town forest fire wardens. The town forest fire warden shall provide a list of all
3 designated deputy forest fire wardens to the Commissioner. Deputy forest fire
4 wardens shall only have the authority to issue permits to kindle a fire as set
5 forth in sections 2644 and 2645 of this subchapter.

6 (c) ~~When there are woodlands within the limits of a city, the chief of the~~
7 ~~fire department of such city shall act as the city forest fire warden with all the~~
8 ~~powers and duties of town forest fire wardens. When a municipality,~~
9 ~~unorganized town, or gore does not have a fire department or is not covered by~~
10 ~~a fire district, the municipality, unorganized town, or gore may contract with a~~
11 ~~neighboring fire department or fire district to designate the chief of the fire~~
12 ~~department or fire district to serve as the town forest fire warden for the~~
13 ~~municipality, unorganized town, or gore. When a private fire department~~
14 ~~provides fire suppression and control services to a municipality, unorganized~~
15 ~~town, or gore, the chief of the private fire department may serve as the town~~
16 ~~forest fire warden when approved by the municipality, unorganized town, or~~
17 ~~gore.~~

18 (d) ~~When the Commissioner deems it difficult in any municipality for one~~
19 ~~warden to take charge of protecting the entire municipality from forest fires, he~~
20 ~~or she may appoint one or more deputy forest fire wardens. Such wardens~~
21 ~~under the direction of the fire warden shall have the same powers, duties, and~~

1 ~~pay and make the same reports through the fire warden to the Commissioner as~~
2 ~~forest fire wardens. [Repealed.]~~

3 (e) The Commissioner may ~~appoint~~ designate special forest fire wardens
4 who shall hold office ~~during~~ at the pleasure of the Commissioner. ~~Such~~ The
5 fire wardens shall be employees of the Department of Forests, Parks and
6 Recreation with forest fire suppression and control training, and shall have the
7 same powers and duties throughout the State as town forest fire wardens,
8 except that all expenses and charges incurred on account of their official acts
9 shall be paid from the appropriations for the Department.

10 § 2642. SALARY AND COMPENSATION OF TOWN FOREST FIRE
11 WARDENS

12 (a) The salary of a town forest fire warden and any deputy town forest fire
13 warden shall be determined by the selectboard members for time spent in the
14 performance of the duties of ~~his or her~~ the warden's office, which shall be paid
15 by the town. ~~In addition thereto, he or she shall receive from the~~
16 ~~Commissioner \$30.00 annually for fulfilling the requirements of section 2645~~
17 ~~of this title and keeping the required State records. He or she shall also receive~~
18 ~~from the Commissioner \$30.00 per diem for attendance at each training~~
19 ~~required by the Commissioner. He or she shall also receive annually an amount~~
20 ~~of \$10.00 for each fire report that is submitted by the forest fire warden under~~
21 ~~section 2644 of this title.~~

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§ 2643. TOWN’S LIABILITY FOR SUPPRESSION OF FOREST FIRES;
STATE AID

(a) A municipality in which a forest fire occurs shall pay the cost to suppress a forest fire that occurs on land that is not owned by the Agency of Natural Resources, including the costs of personnel and equipment. The Commissioner may, ~~according to the Department fire suppression reimbursement policy~~ when funds have been appropriated or are otherwise available, reimburse a municipality for all or a portion of the costs of suppressing a forest fire on land that is not owned by the Agency of Natural Resources.

(b) For the purpose of suppressing forest fires on lands owned by the Agency of Natural Resources, the State ~~shall~~ may reimburse a ~~town municipality or unorganized town or gore~~ for some or all its forest fire suppression costs at a rate determined by the Commissioner ~~according to the Department fire suppression reimbursement policy. If the total acreage of a forest fire is determined to be partially on land owned by the Agency of Natural Resources and partially on land owned by another party, the Commissioner shall, at a minimum, reimburse the town at a rate determined by the Commissioner according to the Department fire suppression reimbursement policy for costs incurred by the municipality on land owned by~~

1 ~~the Agency of Natural Resources~~ if, at a minimum, the requirements in
2 subsection (c) of this section are satisfied. The Commissioner may establish
3 additional requirements and guidance regarding reimbursement.

4 (c) For any forest fire on lands owned by the Agency of Natural Resources
5 to be considered eligible for reimbursement from the State, ~~a town forest fire~~
6 ~~warden shall have reported the forest fire to the Commissioner within 14 days~~
7 ~~of extinguishment of the fire as required under section 2644 of this title. For~~
8 ~~reimbursement of fire suppression costs for forest fires on land owned by the~~
9 ~~Agency of Natural Resources, the town forest fire warden and the~~
10 ~~Commissioner or designee shall approve the costs before submission to the~~
11 ~~municipality for payment. The town forest fire warden may submit to the State~~
12 ~~on an annual basis a request for reimbursement of fire suppression costs on~~
13 ~~lands owned by the Agency of Natural Resources. The State shall reimburse a~~
14 ~~town for all applicable forest fire suppression costs when the reimbursement~~
15 ~~request is presented in a form approved by the Commissioner to the~~
16 ~~Commissioner by December 31 of each year. a municipality, unorganized~~
17 ~~town, or gore shall, at a minimum, satisfy the following requirements:~~

18 (1) The town forest fire warden of a municipality, unorganized town, or
19 gore shall request assistance within one hour of discovery after the forest fire
20 from the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation Wildland Fire Team, for

1 the suppression of the forest fire on land owned by the Agency of Natural
2 Resources.

3 (2) The town forest fire warden shall submit a report of the forest fire to
4 the Commissioner within 24 hours after extinguishment of the fire as required
5 under section 2644 of this title.

6 (3) The municipality, unorganized town, or gore shall submit detailed
7 documentation of the costs of suppression of the forest fire to the
8 Commissioner within 60 days after extinguishment of the forest fire.

9 (4) The Commissioner shall review and approve the request for
10 reimbursement.

11 (d) For requests for reimbursement approved by the Commissioner for
12 forest fire suppression costs of a municipality, unorganized town, or gore on
13 land owned by the Agency of Natural Resources, payment of the costs shall be
14 made by the Commissioner of Finance and Management to the municipality,
15 unorganized town, or gore. The funds for the payment are to be taken from the
16 appropriation for forest fire suppression.

17 § 2644. DUTIES AND POWERS OF FIRE WARDEN

18 (a) When a forest fire or fire threatening ~~a forest~~ forestland is discovered in
19 ~~his or her town~~ the warden's jurisdiction of responsibility, the town forest fire
20 warden shall enter upon any premises and take measures for its prompt control,
21 suppression, and extinguishment. ~~The town forest fire warden may call upon~~

1 ~~any person for assistance. The town forest fire warden may choose to share or~~
2 ~~delegate command authority to a chief engineer of a responding fire~~
3 ~~department or, in the chief's absence, the highest ranking assistant firefighter~~
4 ~~present during the fire. Within 24 hours after discovery of the forest fire on~~
5 ~~lands not owned by the Agency of Natural Resources, the town forest fire~~
6 ~~warden shall notify the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation that the~~
7 ~~fire was discovered.~~

8 (b) A town forest fire warden shall ~~keep~~ prepare a report for all forest fires
9 in the warden's jurisdiction that includes, at a minimum, the following
10 information: a record of ~~his or her~~ the warden's acts, the number of forest fires
11 and causes of the forest fires, the areas burned over, and the character and
12 amount of damages done in the warden's jurisdiction. Within ~~two weeks~~ 48
13 hours after the extinguishment of a fire, the town forest fire warden shall file a
14 report of the fire to the Commissioner, ~~but the making of a report under this~~
15 ~~subsection shall not be a charge against the town.~~

16 * * *

17 (d) Within 12 hours after granting permission to kindle a fire pursuant to
18 section 2645 of this subchapter, the town forest fire warden or deputy forest
19 fire warden shall issue a written "Permit to Kindle" stating when and where the
20 fire may be kindled, including any conditions deemed appropriate by the town
21 forest fire warden.

1 § 2645. OPEN BURNING; PERMITS

2 (a) Except as otherwise provided in this section, a person shall not kindle or
3 authorize another person to kindle a fire in the open air for the purpose of
4 burning natural wood, brush, weeds, or grass without first obtaining
5 ~~permission~~ a permit to kindle a fire from the town forest fire warden or deputy
6 forest fire warden stating when and where ~~such~~ the fire may be kindled and
7 imposing any conditions deemed necessary by the town forest fire warden or
8 deputy forest fire warden. Special forest fire wardens designated by the
9 Commissioner shall issue permits for Category 3 fires on land owned by the
10 Agency of Natural Resources. Wood, brush, weeds, or grass shall not be
11 burned if they have been altered in any way by surface applications or injection
12 of paints, stains, preservatives, oils, glues, or pesticides. Whenever such
13 permission is granted, the fire warden, within 12 hours, shall issue a written
14 “Permit to Kindle” for record purposes stating when and where such fire may
15 be kindled.

16 (b) ~~With the written approval of the Secretary, during~~ During periods of
17 increased fire hazard, or when the Department of Environmental Conservation
18 has issued an Air Quality Alert due to forecasted ambient air quality, the
19 Commissioner may:

1 (1) ~~notify~~ Notify town forest fire wardens that for a specified period no
2 ~~burning~~ permits to kindle a fire shall be issued. The forest fire wardens shall
3 issue no permits during the specified period.

4 (2) Notify town forest fire wardens that for a specified period of time
5 permits for Category 2 or 3 fires shall be prohibited or restricted as set forth by
6 the Commissioner.

7 (3) Notify town forest fire wardens that for a specified period of time,
8 Category 1 fires shall be prohibited or restricted as set forth by the
9 Commissioner.

10 (c) ~~The provisions of this section will not apply to~~ A permit to kindle a fire
11 is not required for the following categories or conditions when the
12 requirements set forth below are satisfied:

13 (1) the kindling of a fire in a location where there is snow surrounding
14 the open burning site;

15 (2) ~~fires built in stone arches, outdoor fireplaces, or existing fire rings at~~
16 ~~State recreational areas or fires built in stone arches, outdoor fireplaces, or fire~~
17 ~~rings on private property that are not located within woodland, timberland, or a~~
18 ~~field containing dry grass or other flammable plant material contiguous to~~
19 ~~woodland;~~ Category 1 fires; or

1 ~~(3) the kindling of a fire in a location that is 200 feet or more from any~~
2 ~~woodland, timberland, or field containing dry grass or other flammable plant~~
3 ~~material contiguous to woodland; or~~

4 ~~(4) areas within cities maintaining a fire department.~~ the kindling of a
5 fire that complies with all requirements established by rule adopted by the
6 Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation when a person is primitive
7 camping on lands owned by the Agency of Natural Resources.

8 ~~(d)(1)~~ The Commissioner of Forests, Parks and Recreation may issue a ban
9 on kindling fires on lands owned by the Agency of Natural Resources when
10 necessary.

11 ~~(e)~~ As used in this section, “natural wood”:

12 ~~(1)~~ “Category 1” includes campfires that meet the following
13 requirements:

14 ~~(A)~~ fires 36 inches in diameter or less that are built in stone arches,
15 outdoor fireplaces, or existing fire rings at State recreational areas, other public
16 recreational areas, or on private property; or

17 ~~(B)~~ fires 36 inches in diameter or less built in a location that is 200
18 feet or more from any forestland, or field containing dry grass or other
19 flammable plant materials contiguous to forestland.

1 mean wood, brush, weeds, or grass if they have been altered in any way by
2 surface applications or injections of paints, stains, preservatives, oils, glues, or
3 pesticides.

4 * * *

5 § 2646. PROCLAMATION BY GOVERNOR PROHIBITING KINDLING
6 OF FIRES: CLOSING OF ~~WOODLANDS~~ FORESTLANDS

7 (a) Whenever it appears to the Governor that there is excessive danger of
8 forest fires, ~~he or she~~ the Governor may prohibit by proclamation the kindling
9 of a fire in or adjoining forestland or close any or all sections of ~~woodland~~
10 forestland, or brushland, in any town for such time as the Governor may
11 designate, to all persons ~~except the owner and his or her household, his or her~~
12 ~~tenants, servants, or agents and persons in the public employment engaged in~~
13 ~~abating such fire hazardous condition.~~

14 (b) Proclamations shall be ~~published in such newspapers of the State and~~
15 posted in such places and in such manner as the Governor may order in
16 writing. A copy of ~~such publication~~ the proclamation and order, attested by the
17 Secretary of Civil and Military Affairs, shall be filed with the Secretary of
18 State and a like copy shall be furnished to the Commissioner who shall attend
19 to the ~~publication and posting thereof~~ of the proclamation. The expenses of
20 ~~such publication and posting~~ shall be paid by the Department. Notice of
21 removal of restrictions imposed by proclamation shall be in the same manner.

1 § 2647. FIRES IN ~~WOODS~~ FORESTLAND OF ANOTHER; PERMISSION

2 No one shall build a fire in the ~~woodlands~~ forestland of another without the
3 permission of the owner, lessee, holder of right-of-way, or his or her
4 authorized agent between April 1 and November 1. A person who builds a fire
5 in or adjoining any woods shall totally extinguish such fire before leaving it.

6 § 2648. SLASH REMOVAL

7 (a) A person may cut or cause to be cut forest growth only if all slash
8 adjoining the right-of-way of any public highway, or the boundary lines of
9 ~~woodlots~~ forestland owned by adjoining property owners, is treated as follows:

10 (1) All slash shall be removed for a distance of 50 feet from the right-of-
11 way of any public highway or from the boundary lines of ~~woodlots~~ forestland
12 owned by adjoining property owners.

13 * * *

14 (d) As used in this section, "slash" means the branches, tree tops, and other
15 woody debris left on the forest floor after logging.

16 Sec. 9. REPEAL

17 10 V.S.A. chapter 83, subchapter 7 (uniform fire prevention ticket) is
18 repealed.

1 Sec. 10. 20 V.S.A. § 2673 is amended to read:

2 § 2673. POWERS AND DUTIES DURING HAZARDOUS CHEMICAL OR
3 SUBSTANCE INCIDENT, FIRES; THREAT OF FIRES OR
4 EXPLOSIONS; FOREST FIRES

5 * * *

6 (e) The chief of a fire district is designated as the town forest fire warden
7 under 10 V.S.A chapter 83, subchapter 4 and shall have the authority and
8 duties related to forest fires pursuant to that subchapter.

9 Sec. 11. 20 V.S.A. § 2992 is amended to read:

10 § 2992. DEFINITION

11 The term “private fire department” includes fire protection organizations
12 operated by industries, institutions, and establishments for self-protection and
13 also nonprofit volunteer fire associations. Nothing contained in this subchapter
14 shall be construed to interfere with the exclusive jurisdiction vested by law in
15 the State Forester ~~and the State Forester’s subordinates~~ or the State Forest Fire
16 Warden over forest fires as provided in 10 V.S.A. § 2603(d); 10 V.S.A. chapter
17 83, ~~subchapters subchapter 4 and 7~~; or 10 V.S.A. chapter 81, nor to affect the
18 laws governing prevention or extinguishment of forest fires. Nothing
19 contained in this subchapter shall be construed to interfere with general
20 authorization vested by law in a chief engineer of a fire district or chief of a

1 volunteer fire department to give outside aid as provided in sections 2674 and
2 2961 of this title.

3 * * * Public Safety Communications * * *

4 Sec. 12. DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY; PUBLIC SAFETY
5 COMMUNICATIONS TASK FORCE; AUTHORIZATION FOR
6 ONGOING EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS

7 (a) The General Assembly authorizes the use of monies appropriated or
8 held in reserve pursuant 2022 Acts and Resolves No. 185, Sec. B.1100, as
9 amended by 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 78, Sec. C.115 and 2023 Acts and
10 Resolves No. 87, Sec. 49, for the Department of Public Safety to procure and
11 implement a multidisciplinary computer-aided dispatch system for public
12 safety communications, subject to the following:

13 (1) \$2,250,000.00 shall be available for immediate costs associated with
14 establishing the multidisciplinary computer-aided dispatch system and five
15 years of software licensing fees, provided that the Department issues requests
16 for proposal and signs contracts for services on or before January 1, 2027;

17 (2) \$190,000.00 shall be immediately available for cybersecurity,
18 expanded use of Rapid SOS, and geographic information systems; and

19 (3) \$4,500,000.00 shall be available incrementally over three years to:

20 (A) implement and expand the Land Mobile Radio network to
21 include a Statewide conceptual design;

1 (B) detail designs for one or more proof of concept projects and
2 initially implement pilot projects; and

3 (C) build out or improve 10 or more Land Mobile Radio sites,
4 including equipment and antenna deployment at existing chosen sites.

5 (b) Notwithstanding any provisions of 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 78, Sec.
6 C.114 to the contrary, the Public Safety Communications Task Force shall
7 continue in existence until February 15, 2027. The Task Force shall meet as
8 necessary to advise the Department of Public Safety on executing the Task
9 Force recommendations and final design plan. Notwithstanding 2023 Acts and
10 Resolves No. 78, Sec. C.114(d)(3), members of the Task Force shall be entitled
11 to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses permitted under 32
12 V.S.A. § 1010. These payments shall be made from monies appropriated to
13 the Department of Public Safety.

14 (c) The Department of Public Safety shall submit written reports to the
15 House Committees on Appropriations and on Government Operations and
16 Military Affairs and the Senate Committees on Appropriations and
17 Government Operations concerning the expenditure of monies pursuant to this
18 section. The Department shall submit the written reports on or before May 1,
19 2027, January 15, 2028, and January 15, 2029, concerning the expenditures
20 made during each respective reporting period.

1 (d) After the end of the three-year period described in subdivision (a)(3) of
2 this section, the Department of Public Safety may submit a request to the
3 General Assembly to authorize the use of any remaining monies from the
4 appropriations appropriated or held in reserve pursuant 2022 Acts and
5 Resolves No. 185, Sec. B.1100, as amended by 2023 Acts and Resolves No.
6 78, Sec. C.115 and 2023 Acts and Resolves No. 87, Sec. 49. Any remaining
7 monies shall not be used by the Department unless authorized by the General
8 Assembly.

9 * * * Vermont Language Justice Project;

10 Emergency and All-Hazards Media * * *

11 Sec. 13. EMERGENCY AND ALL HAZARDS MEDIA; LANGUAGE
12 ACCESS

13 The Agency of Administration shall support the creation of State
14 emergency and all-hazards response and preparedness media in 15 languages,
15 including English and American Sign Language, through the Vermont
16 Language Justice Project.

17 * * * Programs Contingent on Availability of Agency Funds * * *

18 Sec. 13a. PROGRAMS CONTINGENT ON AVAILABILITY OF AGENCY
19 FUNDS

20 The duty to implement Secs. 2 (Technical Rescue Grant Program) and 13
21 (emergency and all hazards media; language access) of this act is contingent

1 upon the availability of sufficient funds within the Department of Public Safety
2 and the Agency of Administration to support the programs.

3 * * * Appropriation * * *

4 Sec. 13b. APPROPRIATION

5 The sum of \$500,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the
6 Department of Public Safety in fiscal year 2027 for the Ready Response Grant
7 Program administered by the Division of Emergency Management.

8 * * * Effective Date * * *

9 Sec. 14. EFFECTIVE DATE

10 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.