

1 TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

2 The Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs to which
3 was referred House Bill No. 397 entitled “An act relating to miscellaneous
4 amendments to the statutes governing emergency management and flood
5 response” respectfully reports that it has considered the same and recommends
6 that the bill be amended by striking out all after the enacting clause and
7 inserting in lieu thereof the following:

8 Sec. 1. 20 V.S.A. § 41 is amended to read:

9 § 41. STATE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN

10 The Department of Public Safety’s Vermont Emergency Management
11 Division, in collaboration with the Chief Recovery Officer and in consultation
12 with regional planning commissions, the Vermont League of Cities and
13 Towns, and Vermont’s long-term recovery groups, shall create, and republish
14 as needed, but not less than every five years, a comprehensive State
15 Emergency Management Plan. The Plan shall:

16 (1) detail response systems during all-hazards events, including
17 communications, coordination among State, local, private, and volunteer
18 entities, and the deployment of State and federal resources. ~~The Plan shall also;~~

19 (2) detail the State’s emergency preparedness measures and goals,
20 including those for the prevention of, protection against, mitigation of, and
21 recovery from all-hazards events. ~~The Plan shall;~~

1 (3) include templates and guidance for regional emergency management
2 and for local emergency plans that support municipalities in their respective
3 emergency management planning; and

4 (4) provide a framework for municipalities to develop and implement:

5 (A) emergency parking plans for areas within a municipality affected
6 by an all-hazard event;

7 (B) municipal plans and systems to ensure that vulnerable
8 populations, including aging populations and individuals with disabilities,
9 within the municipality are contacted and visited to ensure their safety and
10 wellness during an all-hazard event;

11 (C) emergency notification systems to provide real-time alerts to
12 residents, which shall utilize multichannel communication systems; and

13 (D) training to support the officers and staff that municipalities are
14 required to maintain following an all-hazard event, including individual
15 assistance coordinators and disaster waste coordinators.

16 Sec. 2. 20 V.S.A. § 51 is added to read:

17 § 51. FLOOD-PRONE PROPERTIES; VOLUNTARY BUYOUT

18 PROGRAM

19 The Division of Emergency Management and the Agency of Commerce and
20 Community Development shall establish and maintain the Voluntary Buyout
21 Program for flood-prone properties. The Program shall allow a municipality,

1 at the request of the owner of a flood-prone property, to apply for funding to
2 cover the purchase price of the property. The purchase price shall be the full
3 fair market value of the flood-prone property.

4 Sec. 3. 32 V.S.A. § 3710 is added to read:

5 § 3710. VOLUNTARY BUYOUT REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM

6 (a) There is established a Voluntary Buyout Reimbursement Program to
7 reimburse municipalities for the value of municipal property taxes associated
8 with the flood-prone properties acquired by a municipality pursuant to 24
9 V.S.A. § 51 [to preserve as public space with a permanent restriction on
10 development rights].

11 (b) On or before September 1 of each year, the Commissioner of Public
12 Safety shall certify the properties eligible for the Program to the Commissioner
13 of Taxes along with any other information required by the Commissioner of
14 Taxes. To be eligible for reimbursement under the Program, a municipality
15 must have acquired an eligible property on or after July 1, 2023 [and preserved
16 by the municipality as public space or future space with a restriction on
17 development rights]. The Commissioner of Public Safety shall first certify
18 properties to the Commissioner of Taxes pursuant to this subsection by
19 September 1, 2025.

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1 (c) The Commissioner of Taxes shall certify the Program payment amounts
2 to the Secretary of Administration. The Secretary shall make an annual
3 payment to each municipality for each eligible property to compensate for the
4 loss of municipal property tax. The payment shall be calculated using the grand
5 list value of the acquired property for the year during which the property was
6 either damaged by flooding or identified as flood-prone by the Commissioner
7 of Public Safety, multiplied by the municipal tax rate, including any sub-
8 municipal tax rates in effect each year. This payment shall be made on or
9 before January 1 of each year for five years.

10 (d) If a municipality has received payment for any acquired property under
11 subsection (c) of this section for five consecutive years, it shall be eligible for
12 payment for the ensuing five years in an amount equal to one half of the annual
13 payment calculated under subsection (c).

14 (e) Payments made pursuant to this section shall be paid from the PILOT
15 Special Fund established under section 3709 of this subchapter. Payments
16 shall be disbursed only after all other requirements of chapter 123, subchapter
17 4 are met. If the PILOT Special Fund balance is insufficient to pay the full
18 amount of all payments authorized under this subchapter, then payments
19 calculated under this section and due to each eligible municipality for each
20 property shall be reduced proportionately.

21 Sec. 4. DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT; POSITIONS;

1 APPROPRIATION

2 (a) The following positions are created in the Division of Emergency

3 Management:

4 (1) one full-time, exempt Municipal Grant Liaison; and

5 (2) one full-time, exempt All-Hazard Mitigation Technician.

6 (b) The Municipal Grant Liaison shall be dedicated to grant research, grant
7 applications support, coordination between municipal corporations and the
8 Federal Emergency Management Agency, and direct assistance to municipal
9 corporations for the acquisition of grants and other funding sources for all-
10 hazard relief and recovery efforts. The Flood Mitigation Technician shall be
11 dedicated to providing or supporting engineering analyses for all-hazard
12 mitigation projects, oversight of municipal remediation and recovery projects,
13 and managing technical assistance to municipal corporations for all-hazard
14 recovery.

15 Sec. 5. DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT; ALL-HAZARD
16 AND WEATHER ALERT SYSTEMS FOR MUNICIPAL
17 CORPORATIONS

18 Upon request of a municipal corporation, the Division of Emergency
19 Management, in collaboration with regional planning commissions and the
20 Vermont League of Cities and Towns, shall assist the municipal corporation
21 with access to and development of the following:

1 (1) surface water flood monitoring devices, which shall automatically
2 trigger notification systems for emergency services providers and residents;

3 (2) alert systems that are integrated with a statewide weather alert
4 system for real-time updates during severe weather events; and

5 (3) connection to a statewide enhanced weather alert system that:

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

7 and

8 (B) issues real-time warnings for flooding, blizzards, and ice storms
9 through multiple communication channels.

10 Sec. 6. DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT; STATE

11 STAKEHOLDERS; NEEDS ASSESSMENT; REPORT

12 The Division of Emergency Management, Chief Recovery Officer, Agency
13 of Commerce and Community Development, Agency of Natural Resources,
14 and Agency of Transportation shall conduct a needs assessment to identify any
15 additional staffing, resources, technical needs, or authority needed to carry out
16 the provisions of this act. On or before November 15, 2025, the Division shall
17 submit a written report to the House Committees on Appropriations and on
18 Government Operations and Military Affairs and the Senate Committees on
19 Appropriations and on Government Operations containing the needs
20 assessments conducted by the State agencies and departments identified in this
21 section.

1 Sec. 7. APPROPRIATIONS

2 (a) The following sums are appropriated from the General Fund to the
3 Department of Public Safety in fiscal year 2026:

4 (1) \$275,000.00 to support the two positions created in Sec. 3 of this act;
5 and

6 (2) \$950,000.00 to support the Urban Search and Rescue Team created
7 pursuant to 20 V.S.A. § 50.

8 (b) In fiscal year 2026, the sum of \$1,000,000.00 is appropriated from the
9 PILOT Special Fund to the Voluntary Buyout Reimbursement Program
10 established pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 3710.

11 Sec. 8. EFFECTIVE DATE

12 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

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14 (Committee vote: _____)

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Representative _____

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FOR THE COMMITTEE