

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

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SB 208: Disaster Planning and Services

"An Act establishing an Alaska intrastate mutual aid system and relating to the duties of the Alaska division of homeland security and emergency management and the duties of the Alaska State Emergency Response Commission."

In 2004 the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA) in conjunction with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and a host of emergency response organizations, began developing and promoting model legislation for an intrastate mutual aid system (IMAS). The goal of IMAS is to provide a framework for all political subdivisions within a state to receive and render aid to other subdivisions within a state in times of need.

SB 208 will implement this model legislation in a manner that will be beneficial for Alaskan communities. The system detailed in SB 208 will provide a framework for mutual assistance among the participating political subdivisions – regions, boroughs, municipalities, and other local jurisdictions - in the prevention of, response to, and recovery from any disaster that results in a formal declaration of local disaster emergency.

The employees and volunteers who serve in emergency services recognize that emergencies transcend political jurisdictional boundaries. They, and the local agencies they serve, understand that intergovernmental coordination is essential for the protection of lives and property and for best use of available assets. Currently, the Alaska Disaster Act does provide for political subdivisions to create mutual aid agreements, which, in practice, works well for neighboring entities or service areas that have an established history of providing mutual aid to one another. These local mutual aid agreements vary widely in their scope and may not all address key issues of liability and compensation. Further, they may not encompass all emergency services. Through SB 208, a statewide agreement would be developed to supplement existing regional or local agreements by establishing a comprehensive, integrated system of mutual aid at a state level that will ensure an efficient and effective response to all hazards and disasters.

SB 208 would allow all political subdivisions to automatically be included in the statewide mutual aid system. A political subdivision may elect to withdraw by enacting an appropriate resolution by its governing body. This legislation would not prevent participating entities from entering into supplementary agreements with other political subdivisions or impact any existing or future agreements. If a participating entity cannot provide assistance to a requesting entity, they are not obligated or bound to provide assistance.

Thank you for your consideration for SB 208. I urge you to support this vital piece of legislation which will provide meaningful support and structure for Alaska's emergency services.