



## Legislation Text

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Clerk 6/5/2007

A MOTION adopting a five-point plan for improving King County's emergency preparedness.

WHEREAS, King County experienced the rainiest month on record for the Puget Sound area in November 2006, with a total rainfall of over fifteen inches, which created widespread flooding, drainage issues and slope instability, and

WHEREAS, King County experienced severe windstorms on December 14 and 15, 2006, which knocked out power to more than one million customers and caused fourteen deaths, including eight persons who died of carbon monoxide poisoning, and

WHEREAS, King County experienced severe snow and ice conditions in December 2006 and January 2007 that challenged road maintenance crews and transit providers, and

WHEREAS, although local governments, public and private utilities and private nonprofit agencies responded quickly and efficiently to the unique and unprecedented challenges presented by the recent winter storms, it is prudent to examine those responses so that the lessons learned can be used to improve future emergency management response, and

WHEREAS, particular areas of possible improvement that have been identified include the availability of emergency shelter, the management and signage of traffic in accordance with applicable RCW sections at intersections where traffic control devices have lost power, the coordination of human services and the welfare of King County residents with special needs or few resources, who are unusually vulnerable to weather, natural disasters and other emergency conditions, and

WHEREAS, in the aftermath of hurricane Katrina, businesses, nonprofit organizations and other legal entities proved to be effective agents of relief and care for the population, and

WHEREAS, the council is interested in working with other local government and private agencies, elected officials and emergency management professionals to address these and other issues;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT MOVED by the Council of King County:

A.1. The council requests the King County emergency management advisory committee ("EMAC") to review existing emergency management plans and activities and, where appropriate, to make recommendations to the council and executive regarding:

- a. existing and needed day and night shelter facilities for persons who have been displaced by weather, natural disaster or other emergency conditions;
- b. infrastructure improvements needed for those facilities to better serve their intended purposes;
- c. the extent to which local government and private agencies in the Puget Sound area are cooperating with King County to develop a regional sheltering plan to ensure every community has the resources to meet the needs of those who are displaced as a result of a storm, natural disaster or other emergency conditions; and
- d. expanding the role of businesses, nonprofit organizations and other legal entities in planning for and responding to disasters and emergencies.

2. The council recognizes that the Regional Disaster Plan assigns city governments the responsibility for providing emergency shelters for residents of incorporated areas, while counties are responsible to provide shelters for residents of unincorporated areas.

B. The council requests the EMAC to review the King County Emergency Management Plan and the Regional Disaster Plan to evaluate what updates and implementation actions are needed in response to lessons learned from the winter storms of 2006 and 2007, with particular, but not exclusive, emphasis on:

1. Improving communication between government agencies and the public regarding the current and future status of utility and other essential services;

2. Improving communication with diverse communities including potential language barriers;
3. Meeting the needs of vulnerable and special needs populations including those with pets;
4. Meeting the needs of individuals served by state-licensed facilities, including identifying the role of state agencies, local governments, private parties and other key actors;
5. Meeting the needs of families and individuals with few resources for dealing with emergencies;
6. Providing communication about emergency responses in alternative languages and accessible formats;
7. Making recommendations as to how best to communicate to the public when electric power is out;
8. Requiring helipads for evacuations from buildings six stories and taller; and
9. Ensuring critical King County facilities are supplied with enough emergency materials and staffing to continue operations independently for at least three days.

C. The council requests the executive and the sheriff to provide the council with an analysis of traffic management measures that can be taken to minimize impacts from weather, natural disaster and other emergency conditions. The analysis should:

1. Identify the busiest intersections in unincorporated King County;
2. Include a plan with cost estimates for assisting the safe movement of traffic at those intersections to minimize impacts from widespread power outages; and
3. Identify potential liability and staffing issues.

D. Based on a review of relevant plans, the council requests the executive to:

1. Prepare an analysis of ways to better integrate the efforts of human services providers, including not only government agencies, but also private entities, such as adult family homes, to meet the needs of King County residents during storms, natural disasters and other emergency conditions;
2. Explore the feasibility of expanding the role of businesses, nonprofit organizations and other legal entities in planning for and responding to disasters and emergencies; and

3. Identify the feasibility and potential cost and of providing for free disposal of debris caused by a disaster involving an executive-declared emergency.

E. Based on the executive's review of the plans and EMAC recommendations, the council requests the executive to work with utilities to develop a system for identifying King County residents with special needs, so that first responders can be directed to the residences of special needs individuals with an understanding of their requirements.

F. The executive, the sheriff and the EMAC are requested to transmit their findings and recommendations to the council by October 1, 2007, filed in the form of twelve copies with the clerk of the council, who will retain the original and will forward

copies to each councilmember, the policy staff director and to the lead staff for the general government and labor relations committee, or its successor.