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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR <u>Senate Tax, Business and Transportation Committee</u>	LAST UPDATED <u>3/15/25</u> ORIGINAL DATE <u>2/12/25</u>	BILL NUMBER <u>CS/Senate Bill 353/STBTCS/aHG EIC</u>
SHORT TITLE <u>Search & Rescue Emergency Responses</u>	ANALYST <u>Sanchez</u>	

ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT*

(dollars in thousands)

Agency/Program	FY25	FY26	FY27	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
Any and All Agencies Solicited for Analysis	See Fiscal Implications	See Fiscal Implications	See Fiscal Implications	See Fiscal Implications	Recurring	General Fund

Parenttheses () indicate expenditure decreases.
 *Amounts reflect most recent analysis of this legislation.

Sources of Information

LFC Files

Because of the short timeframe between the introduction of this committee substitute and its first hearing, LFC has yet to receive analysis from state, education, or judicial agencies. This analysis could be updated if that analysis is received.

Agency Analysis was Solicited but Not Received From

Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHSEM)
 Department of Public Safety (DPS)
 Office of the Attorney General (NMAG)
 Municipal League (ML)
 Council of Governments (COGS)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of HGEIC Amendments to Senate Bill 353

The House Government, Elections, and Indian Affairs Committee amendment to Senate Bill 353 (SB353) make minor technical corrections. The amendment replaces the term "service" with "safety" in two instances on page 4 of the bill, ensuring consistency in terminology related to emergency response. The amendment does not alter the substantive provisions of the bill or its fiscal implications.

Synopsis of STBTC Substitute for Senate Bill 353

The Senate Tax, Business, and Transportation Committee substitute for Senate Bill 353 proposes amendments to Section 24-15A-3 NMSA 1978 (Search and Rescue Act) to establish response

protocols for federal, state, local, and tribal agencies when New Mexico Search and Rescue (SAR) is required in emergencies. The bill expands SAR definitions, adding "tribe" or "tribal," and clarifies roles within SAR operations, including the state SAR control agency, mission initiators, and resource officers.

The bill directs the state SAR resource officer, in consultation with emergency response entities and SAR volunteer organizations, to develop standardized criteria for notifying the state SAR control agency of a SAR emergency. It requires SAR training for emergency response personnel and public service answering points (PSAPs). It mandates immediate notification to relevant authorities, including affected land management agencies, when SAR resources are activated. If SAR resources are unavailable, the state SAR control agency must assist in securing alternate resources.

The effective date of this bill is January 1, 2026.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The committee substitute for SB353 may create new fiscal obligations for the Department of Public Safety (DPS), local emergency response agencies, and SAR volunteer organizations due to expanded coordination, training, and reporting requirements. The bill does not contain an appropriation, but agencies may incur costs in FY25 and FY26 as they prepare for implementation.

As the state SAR control agency, DPS is responsible for developing standardized notification criteria, conducting a formal consultation process, and providing training to emergency response personnel across multiple jurisdictions. These responsibilities could increase administrative costs related to staffing, stakeholder engagement, and training development. If DPS lacks sufficient resources, additional funding may be necessary for personnel and program support.

Local emergency response agencies, including law enforcement, fire departments, and PSAPs, may incur training and compliance costs. The bill requires SAR training for all emergency responders, which could necessitate new training programs, travel expenses, or technology updates to facilitate SAR reporting. If these costs exceed existing budgets, local agencies may request state support or additional appropriations.

SAR volunteer organizations, which provide a significant portion of SAR services in New Mexico, may face indirect fiscal impacts. If the bill's reporting and coordination requirements create administrative burdens or certification challenges, volunteer participation could decline, forcing greater reliance on paid personnel. This shift could raise long-term operational costs for DPS and local jurisdictions.

Additionally, the bill requires prompt notification of SAR emergencies to affected land management agencies, including federal and tribal authorities. If formal agreements or memorandums of understanding (MOUs) are required, DPS or local agencies may need additional legal or administrative resources to negotiate and maintain these agreements.

Further analysis from DPS, local governments, and SAR organizations is needed to determine whether agencies can absorb these costs within existing budgets or require future funding requests.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The committee substitute for SB353 introduces new interagency coordination requirements that may affect emergency response efficiency and jurisdictional authority. The bill mandates standardized SAR notification protocols and requires formal consultation with federal, state, local, and tribal emergency responders. While these changes aim to improve SAR coordination, they may also increase administrative complexity. If stakeholders disagree on procedural changes, implementation could be delayed.

The bill requires immediate notification to the state SAR control agency, which could impact local decision-making authority in emergencies. In jurisdictions with existing SAR frameworks, agencies may need to adjust operational protocols to comply with the new requirements. The bill does not specify penalties for noncompliance, leaving uncertainty about oversight responsibilities.

The inclusion of tribal emergency response agencies reflects an effort to ensure broader jurisdictional collaboration, but it also raises questions about roles and authority. The bill does not clarify how sovereign tribal authority would interact with the state SAR control agency's mandates. Additionally, if SAR operations occur on tribal lands, it is unclear whether state protocols would supersede tribal emergency procedures or if additional agreements would be required.

Ensuring effective implementation before January 1, 2026, may require agencies to establish formal MOUs with land management agencies and define clear jurisdictional roles. Further input from DPS, local governments, and tribal authorities may be needed to clarify operational and enforcement concerns.

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