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SENATE BILL NO. 635

Offered January 14, 2026

Prefiled January 14, 2026

A BILL to amend and reenact §§ 44-146.16, 44-146.17, 44-146.18, 44-146.18:2, 44-146.18:4, 44-146.19, 44-146.21, and 44-146.28 of the Code of Virginia and to amend the Code of Virginia by adding in Chapter 3.2 of Title 44 a section numbered 44-146.18:1.1, relating to Emergency Services and Disaster Law; declaration of a state of preparedness.

Patron—McDougle

Referred to Committee on General Laws and Technology

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That §§ 44-146.16, 44-146.17, 44-146.18, 44-146.18:2, 44-146.18:4, 44-146.19, 44-146.21, and 44-146.28 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted and that the Code of Virginia is amended by adding in Chapter 3.2 of Title 44 a section numbered 44-146.18:1.1 as follows:

§ 44-146.16. Definitions.

As used in this chapter, unless the context requires a different meaning:

"Communicable disease of public health threat" means an illness of public health significance, as determined by the State Health Commissioner in accordance with regulations of the Board of Health, caused by a specific or suspected infectious agent that may be reasonably expected or is known to be readily transmitted directly or indirectly from one individual to another and has been found to create a risk of death or significant injury or impairment; this definition shall not, however, be construed to include human immunodeficiency viruses or tuberculosis, unless used as a bioterrorism weapon. "Individual" shall include any companion animal. Further, whenever "person or persons" is used in Article 3.02 (§ 32.1-48.05 et seq.) of Chapter 2 of Title 32.1, it shall be deemed, when the context requires it, to include any individual.

"Cyber incident" means an event occurring on or conducted through a computer network that actually or imminently jeopardizes the integrity, confidentiality, or availability of computers, information or communications systems or networks, physical or virtual infrastructure controlled by computers or information systems, or information resident thereon. "Cyber incident" includes a vulnerability in information systems, system security procedures, internal controls, or implementations that could be exploited by a threat source.

"Disaster" means (i) any man-made disaster, including any condition following an attack by any enemy or foreign nation upon the United States resulting in substantial damage of property or injury to persons in the United States including by use of bombs, missiles, shell fire, or nuclear, radiological, chemical, or biological means or other weapons or by overt paramilitary actions; terrorism, foreign and domestic; cyber incidents; and any industrial, nuclear, or transportation accident, explosion, conflagration, power failure, resources shortage, or other condition such as sabotage, oil spills, and other injurious environmental contaminations that threaten or cause damage to property, human suffering, hardship, or loss of life and (ii) any natural disaster, including any hurricane, tornado, storm, flood, high water, wind-driven water, tidal wave, earthquake, drought, fire, communicable disease of public health threat, or other natural catastrophe resulting in damage, hardship, suffering, or possible loss of life.

"Discharge" means spillage, leakage, pumping, pouring, seepage, emitting, dumping, emptying, injecting, escaping, leaching, fire, explosion, or other releases.

"Emergency" means any occurrence, or threat thereof, whether natural or man-made, which results or may result in substantial injury or harm to the population or substantial damage to or loss of property or natural resources and may involve governmental action beyond that authorized or contemplated by existing law because governmental inaction for the period required to amend the law to meet the exigency would work immediate and irrevocable harm upon the citizens or the environment of the Commonwealth or some clearly defined portion or portions thereof.

"Emergency services" means the preparation for and the carrying out of functions, other than functions for which military forces are primarily responsible, to prevent, minimize, and repair injury and damage resulting from disasters, together with all other activities necessary or incidental to the preparation for and carrying out of the foregoing functions. These functions include, without limitation, firefighting services, police services, medical and health services, rescue, engineering, warning services, communications, radiological, chemical, and other special weapons defense, evacuation of persons from stricken areas, emergency welfare services, emergency transportation, emergency resource management, existing or properly assigned functions of plant protection, temporary restoration of public utility services, and other functions related to civilian protection. These functions also include the administration of approved state and federal disaster recovery and assistance

59 programs.

60 "Hazard mitigation" means any action taken to reduce or eliminate the long-term risk to human life and  
61 property from natural hazards.

62 "Hazardous substances" means all materials or substances that now or hereafter are designated, defined, or  
63 characterized as hazardous by law or regulation of the Commonwealth or regulation of the United States  
64 government.

65 "Interjurisdictional agency for emergency management" is any organization established between  
66 contiguous political subdivisions to facilitate the cooperation and protection of the subdivisions in the work  
67 of disaster prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery.

68 "Local emergency" means the condition declared by the local governing body when in its judgment the  
69 threat or actual occurrence of an emergency or disaster is or threatens to be of sufficient severity and  
70 magnitude to warrant coordinated local government action to prevent or alleviate the damage, loss, hardship,  
71 or suffering threatened or caused thereby, provided, however, that a local emergency arising wholly or  
72 substantially out of a resource shortage may be declared only by the Governor, upon petition of the local  
73 governing body, when he deems the threat or actual occurrence of such an emergency or disaster to be of  
74 sufficient severity and magnitude to warrant coordinated local government action to prevent or alleviate the  
75 damage, loss, hardship, or suffering threatened or caused thereby, and provided, however, nothing in this  
76 chapter shall be construed as prohibiting a local governing body from the prudent management of its water  
77 supply to prevent or manage a water shortage.

78 "Local emergency management organization" means an organization created in accordance with the  
79 provisions of this chapter by local authority to perform local emergency service functions.

80 "Major disaster" means any natural catastrophe, including any: hurricane, tornado, storm, high water,  
81 wind-driven water, tidal wave, tsunami, earthquake, volcanic eruption, landslide, mudslide, snowstorm, or  
82 drought, or regardless of cause, any fire, flood, or explosion, in any part of the United States, which, in the  
83 determination of the President of the United States is, or thereafter determined to be, of sufficient severity and  
84 magnitude to warrant major disaster assistance under the Stafford Act (P.L. 93-288 as amended) to  
85 supplement the efforts and available resources of states, local governments, and disaster relief organizations  
86 in alleviating the damage, loss, hardship, or suffering caused thereby and is so declared by him.

87 "Political subdivision" means any city or county in the Commonwealth and, for the purposes of this  
88 chapter, the Town of Chincoteague and any town of more than 5,000 population that chooses to have an  
89 emergency management program separate from that of the county in which such town is located.

90 "Resource shortage" means the absence, unavailability, or reduced supply of any raw or processed natural  
91 resource or any commodities, goods, or services of any kind that bear a substantial relationship to the health,  
92 safety, welfare, and economic well-being of the citizens of the Commonwealth.

93 "State of emergency" means the condition declared by the Governor when in his judgment the threat or  
94 actual occurrence of an emergency or a disaster in any part of the Commonwealth is of sufficient severity and  
95 magnitude to warrant disaster assistance by the Commonwealth to supplement the efforts and available  
96 resources of the several localities and relief organizations in preventing or alleviating the damage, loss,  
97 hardship, or suffering threatened or caused thereby and is so declared by him.

98 "*State of preparedness*" means the condition declared by the Governor when in his judgment the threat or  
99 danger of a credible emergency or a disaster in any part of the Commonwealth is of sufficient severity and  
100 magnitude to warrant disaster preparedness assistance by the Commonwealth to supplement the  
101 preparedness efforts and pre-position available resources of the several localities and relief organizations in  
102 preventing or alleviating the damage, loss, hardship, or suffering threatened or caused thereby and is so  
103 declared by him.

#### 104 § 44-146.17. Powers and duties of Governor.

105 A. The Governor shall be Director of Emergency Management. He shall take such action from time to  
106 time as is necessary for the adequate promotion and coordination of state and local emergency services  
107 activities relating to the safety and welfare of the Commonwealth in time of disasters.

108 The Governor shall have, in addition to his powers hereinafter or elsewhere prescribed by law, the  
109 following powers and duties:

110 (1) To proclaim and publish such rules and regulations and to issue such orders as may, in his judgment,  
111 be necessary to accomplish the purposes of this chapter including, but not limited to such measures as are in  
112 his judgment required to control, restrict, allocate or regulate the use, sale, production and distribution of  
113 food, fuel, clothing and other commodities, materials, goods, services and resources under any state or federal  
114 emergency services programs.

115 He may adopt and implement the Commonwealth of Virginia Emergency Operations Plan, which  
116 provides for state-level emergency operations in *preparedness for and* response to any type of disaster or  
117 large-scale emergency affecting Virginia and that provides the needed framework within which more detailed  
118 emergency plans and procedures can be developed and maintained by state agencies, local governments and  
119 other organizations.

120 He may direct and compel evacuation of all or part of the populace from any stricken or threatened area if

121 this action is deemed necessary for the preservation of life, implement emergency mitigation, preparedness,  
122 response or recovery actions; prescribe routes, modes of transportation and destination in connection with  
123 evacuation; and control ingress and egress at an emergency area, including the movement of persons within  
124 the area and the occupancy of premises therein.

125 Executive orders, to include those declaring a state of emergency *or state of preparedness* and directing  
126 evacuation, shall have the force and effect of law and the violation thereof shall be punishable as a Class 1  
127 misdemeanor in every case where the executive order declares that its violation shall have such force and  
128 effect.

129 Such executive orders declaring a state of emergency *or state of preparedness* may address exceptional  
130 circumstances that exist relating to an order of quarantine or an order of isolation concerning a communicable  
131 disease of public health threat that is issued by the State Health Commissioner for an affected area of the  
132 Commonwealth pursuant to Article 3.02 (§ 32.1-48.05 et seq.) of Chapter 2 of Title 32.1.

133 *Any rule, regulation, or order declaring a state of preparedness under this section shall expire 15 days*  
134 *after issuance or immediately upon the declaration of a state of emergency.* No rule, regulation, or order  
135 issued under this section shall have any effect beyond 45 days after the date of issuance. Unless the General  
136 Assembly takes action on the rule, regulation, or order within the 45 days during which the rule, regulation,  
137 or order is effective, the Governor shall thereafter be prohibited from issuing the same or a similar rule,  
138 regulation, or order relating to the same emergency;

139 (2) To appoint a State Coordinator of Emergency Management and authorize the appointment or  
140 employment of other personnel as is necessary to carry out the provisions of this chapter, and to remove, in  
141 his discretion, any and all persons serving hereunder;

142 (3) To procure supplies and equipment, to institute training and public information programs relative to  
143 emergency management and to take other preparatory steps including the partial or full mobilization of  
144 emergency management organizations in advance of actual disaster, to insure the furnishing of adequately  
145 trained and equipped forces in time of need;

146 (4) To make such studies and surveys of industries, resources, and facilities in the Commonwealth as may  
147 be necessary to ascertain the capabilities of the Commonwealth and to plan for the most efficient emergency  
148 use thereof;

149 (5) On behalf of the Commonwealth to enter into mutual aid arrangements with other states and to  
150 coordinate mutual aid plans between political subdivisions of the Commonwealth. After a state of emergency  
151 is declared in another state and the Governor receives a written request for assistance from the executive  
152 authority of that state, the Governor may authorize the use in the other state of personnel, equipment,  
153 supplies, and materials of the Commonwealth, or of a political subdivision, with the consent of the chief  
154 executive officer or governing body of the political subdivision;

155 (6) To delegate any administrative authority vested in him under this chapter, and to provide for the  
156 further delegation of any such authority, as needed;

157 (7) Whenever, in the opinion of the Governor, the safety and welfare of the people of the Commonwealth  
158 require the exercise of emergency measures due to a threatened or actual disaster, to declare a state of  
159 emergency *or state of preparedness* to exist;

160 (8) To request a major disaster declaration from the President, thereby certifying the need for federal  
161 disaster assistance and ensuring the expenditure of a reasonable amount of funds of the Commonwealth, its  
162 local governments, or other agencies for alleviating the damage, loss, hardship, or suffering resulting from the  
163 disaster;

164 (9) To provide incident command system guidelines for state agencies and local emergency response  
165 organizations;

166 (10) Whenever, in the opinion of the Governor or his designee, an employee of a state or local public  
167 safety agency responding to a disaster has suffered an extreme personal or family hardship in the affected  
168 area, such as the destruction of a personal residence or the existence of living conditions that imperil the  
169 health and safety of an immediate family member of the employee, to direct the Comptroller of the  
170 Commonwealth to issue warrants not to exceed \$2,500 per month, for up to three calendar months, to the  
171 employee to assist the employee with the hardship; and

172 (11) During a disaster caused by a communicable disease of public health threat for which a state of  
173 emergency *or state of preparedness* has been declared pursuant to subdivision (7), to establish a program  
174 through which the Governor may purchase PPE for private, nongovernmental entities and distribute the PPE  
175 to such private, nongovernmental entities. If federal funding is available to establish and fund the program,  
176 the Governor, if necessary to comply with any conditions attached to such federal funding, shall be entitled to  
177 seek reimbursement for such purchases from the private, nongovernmental entities and may establish and  
178 charge fees to recover the cost of administering the program, including the cost of procuring and distributing  
179 the PPE. However, if federal funding is not available to establish and fund the program, the Governor shall,  
180 prior to making such purchases, receive a contract for payment for purchase from the private  
181 nongovernmental entities for the full cost of procuring and distributing the PPE, which shall include any  
182 amortized costs of administering the program. Any purchase made by the Governor pursuant to this

183 subdivision shall be exempt from the provisions of the Virginia Public Procurement Act (§ 2.2-4300 et seq.),  
184 except the Governor shall be encouraged to comply with the provisions of § 2.2-4310 when possible. The  
185 Governor shall also provide for competition where practicable and include a written statement regarding the  
186 basis for awarding any contract. Prior to implementing such a program, the Department of Emergency  
187 Management shall consult with and survey private, nongovernmental entities in order to assess demand for  
188 participation in the program as well as the quantity and types of personal protective equipment such entities  
189 would like to procure.

190 As used in this subdivision, "personal protective equipment" or "PPE" means equipment or supplies worn  
191 or employed to minimize exposure to hazards that cause serious workplace injuries and illnesses and may  
192 include items such as gloves, safety glasses and shoes, earplugs or muffs, hard hats, respirators, coveralls,  
193 vests, full body suits, hand sanitizer, plastic shields, or testing for the communicable disease of public health  
194 threat.

195 B. No rule, regulation, or order issued by the Governor or other governmental entity pursuant to this  
196 chapter shall impose restrictions on the operation of a place of worship that are more restrictive than the  
197 restrictions imposed on any other business, organization, or activity.

198 **§ 44-146.18. Department of Emergency Management; administration and operational control;**  
199 **coordinator and other personnel; powers and duties.**

200 A. The State Office of Emergency Services is continued and shall hereafter be known as the Department  
201 of Emergency Management (the Department). Wherever the words "State Department of Emergency  
202 Services" are used in any law of the Commonwealth, they shall mean the Department of Emergency  
203 Management. During a declared emergency *or state of preparedness*, this Department shall revert to the  
204 operational control of the Governor. The Department shall have a coordinator who shall be appointed by and  
205 serve at the pleasure of the Governor and also serve as State Emergency Planning Director. The Department  
206 shall employ the professional, technical, secretarial, and clerical employees necessary for the performance of  
207 its functions.

208 B. The Department shall in the administration of emergency services and disaster preparedness programs:

209 1. In coordination with political subdivisions and state agencies, ensure that the Commonwealth has up-to-  
210 date assessments and preparedness plans to prevent, respond to, and recover from all disasters including acts  
211 of terrorism;

212 2. Conduct a statewide emergency management assessment in cooperation with political subdivisions,  
213 private industry, and other public and private entities deemed vital to preparedness, public safety, and  
214 security. The assessment shall include a review of emergency response plans, which include the variety of  
215 hazards, natural and man-made. The assessment shall be updated annually;

216 3. Promulgate plans and programs that are conducive to adequate disaster mitigation preparedness,  
217 response, and recovery programs;

218 4. Prepare and maintain a State Emergency Operations Plan for disaster *preparedness*, response, and  
219 recovery operations that assigns primary and support responsibilities for basic emergency services functions  
220 to state agencies, organizations, and personnel as appropriate;

221 5. Coordinate and administer disaster mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery plans and  
222 programs with the proponent federal, state, and local government agencies and related groups;

223 6. Provide guidance and assistance to state agencies and units of local government in developing and  
224 maintaining emergency management and continuity of operations (COOP) programs, plans, and systems;

225 7. Make necessary recommendations to agencies of the federal, state, or local governments on preventive  
226 and preparedness measures designed to eliminate or reduce disasters and their impact;

227 8. Determine requirements of the Commonwealth and its political subdivisions for those necessities  
228 needed in the event of a declared emergency *or state of preparedness* which are not otherwise readily  
229 available;

230 9. Assist state agencies and political subdivisions in establishing and operating training programs and  
231 programs of public information and education regarding emergency services and disaster preparedness  
232 activities;

233 10. Consult with the Board of Education regarding the development and revision of a model school crisis  
234 and emergency management plan for the purpose of assisting public schools in establishing, operating, and  
235 maintaining emergency services and disaster preparedness activities;

236 11. Consult with the State Council of Higher Education in the development and revision of a model  
237 institutional crisis and emergency management plan for the purpose of assisting public and private two-year  
238 and four-year institutions of higher education in establishing, operating, and maintaining emergency services  
239 and disaster preparedness activities and, as needed, in developing an institutional crisis and emergency  
240 management plan pursuant to § 23.1-804;

241 12. Develop standards, provide guidance, and encourage the maintenance of local and state agency  
242 emergency operations plans, which shall include the requirement for a provision that the Department of  
243 Criminal Justice Services and the Virginia Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund be contacted immediately to  
244 deploy assistance in the event of an emergency as defined in the emergency response plan when there are

245 victims as defined in § 19.2-11.01. The Department of Criminal Justice Services and the Virginia Criminal  
 246 Injuries Compensation Fund shall be the lead coordinating agencies for those individuals determined to be  
 247 victims, and the plan shall also contain current contact information for both agencies;

248 13. Prepare, maintain, coordinate, or implement emergency resource management plans and programs  
 249 with federal, state, and local government agencies and related groups, and make such surveys of industries,  
 250 resources, and facilities within the Commonwealth, both public and private, as are necessary to carry out the  
 251 purposes of this chapter;

252 14. Coordinate with the federal government and any public or private agency or entity in achieving any  
 253 purpose of this chapter and in implementing programs for disaster prevention, mitigation, preparation,  
 254 response, and recovery;

255 15. Establish guidelines pursuant to § 44-146.28, and administer payments to eligible applicants as  
 256 authorized by the Governor;

257 16. Coordinate and be responsible for the receipt, evaluation, and dissemination of emergency services  
 258 intelligence pertaining to all probable hazards affecting the Commonwealth;

259 17. Coordinate intelligence activities relating to terrorism with the Department of State Police;

260 18. Develop an emergency response plan to address the needs of individuals with household pets and  
 261 service animals in the event of a disaster and assist and coordinate with local agencies in developing an  
 262 emergency response plan for household pets and service animals; and

263 19. Establish and maintain an Emergency Management Equity Working Group (the Working Group) to  
 264 ensure that emergency management programs and plans provide support to at-risk individuals and  
 265 populations disproportionately impacted by disasters. The Working Group shall include experts from (i) the  
 266 Governor's Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and other state agencies; (ii) the public at large; and (iii)  
 267 the private sector who have expertise related to at-risk and vulnerable populations and the threats faced by  
 268 such populations during a disaster.

269 The Department of Emergency Management shall ensure that all such plans, assessments, and programs  
 270 required by this subsection include specific preparedness for, and response to, disasters resulting from  
 271 electromagnetic pulses and geomagnetic disturbances.

272 C. The Department of Emergency Management shall during a period of impending emergency or,  
 273 declared emergency, *or state of preparedness* be responsible for:

274 1. The receipt, evaluation, and dissemination of intelligence pertaining to an impending or actual disaster;

275 2. Providing facilities from which state agencies and supporting organizations may conduct emergency  
 276 operations;

277 3. Providing an adequate communications and warning system capable of notifying all political  
 278 subdivisions in the Commonwealth of an impending disaster within a reasonable time;

279 4. Establishing and maintaining liaison with affected political subdivisions;

280 5. Determining requirements for disaster relief and recovery assistance;

281 6. Coordinating disaster response actions of federal, state and volunteer relief agencies; and

282 7. Coordinating and providing guidance and assistance to affected political subdivisions to ensure orderly  
 283 and timely *preparedness for*, response to, and recovery from disaster effects.

284 D. The Department of Emergency Management shall be provided the necessary facilities and equipment  
 285 needed to perform its normal day-to-day activities and coordinate disaster-related activities of the various  
 286 federal, state, and other agencies during a state of emergency *or state of preparedness* declaration by the  
 287 Governor or following a major disaster declaration by the President.

288 E. The Department of Emergency Management is authorized to enter into all contracts and agreements  
 289 necessary or incidental to performance of any of its duties stated in this section or otherwise assigned to it by  
 290 law, including contracts with the United States, other states, agencies and government subdivisions of the  
 291 Commonwealth, and other appropriate public and private entities.

292 F. The Department of Emergency Management shall encourage private industries whose goods and  
 293 services are deemed vital to the public good to provide annually updated preparedness assessments to the  
 294 local coordinator of emergency management on or before April 1 of each year, to facilitate overall  
 295 Commonwealth preparedness. For the purposes of this section, "private industry" means companies, private  
 296 hospitals, and other businesses or organizations deemed by the State Coordinator of Emergency Management  
 297 to be essential to the public safety and well-being of the citizens of the Commonwealth.

298 G. The Department of Emergency Management shall establish a Coordinator of Search and Rescue.  
 299 Powers and duties of the Coordinator shall include:

300 1. Coordinating the search and rescue function of the Department of Emergency Management;

301 2. Coordinating with local, state, and federal agencies involved in search and rescue;

302 3. Coordinating the activities of search and rescue organizations involved in search and rescue;

303 4. Maintaining a register of search and rescue certifications, training, and responses;

304 5. Establishing a memorandum of understanding with the Virginia Search and Rescue Council and its  
 305 respective member agencies regarding search and rescue efforts;

306 6. Providing on-scene search and rescue coordination when requested by an authorized person;

307 7. Providing specialized search and rescue training to police, fire-rescue, EMS, emergency managers,  
 308 volunteer search and rescue responders, and others who might have a duty to respond to a search and rescue  
 309 emergency;

310 8. Gathering and maintaining statistics on search and rescue in the Commonwealth;

311 9. Compiling, maintaining, and making available an inventory of search and rescue resources available in  
 312 the Commonwealth; and

313 10. Periodically reviewing search and rescue cases and developing best professional practices.

314 Nothing in this chapter shall be construed as authorizing the Department of Emergency Management to  
 315 take direct operational responsibilities from local, state, or federal law enforcement in the course of search  
 316 and rescue or missing person cases.

317 **§ 44-146.18:1.1. Cardinal Disaster Relief Fund disbursements; reimbursements.**

318 *A. There is hereby created a nonlapsing revolving fund, which shall be maintained as a separate special*  
 319 *fund account within the state treasury and administered by the Coordinator of Emergency Management,*  
 320 *consistent with the purposes of this chapter. All expenses, costs, and judgments recovered pursuant to this*  
 321 *section, and all moneys received as reimbursement in accordance with applicable provisions of federal law,*  
 322 *shall be paid into the fund. Additionally, an annual appropriation to the fund from the general fund or other*  
 323 *unrestricted nongeneral fund, in an amount determined by the Governor, may be authorized to carry out the*  
 324 *purposes of this chapter. All recoveries from occurrences prior to March 10, 1983, and otherwise qualifying*  
 325 *under this section, received subsequent to March 10, 1983, shall be paid into the fund. No moneys shall be*  
 326 *credited to the balance in the fund until they have been received by the fund. An accounting of moneys*  
 327 *received and disbursed shall be kept and furnished to the Governor or the General Assembly upon request.*

328 *Disbursements from the fund may be made for the following purposes and no others:*

329 *1. For costs and expenses, including personnel, administrative, and equipment costs and expenses directly*  
 330 *incurred by the Department of Emergency Management or by any other state agency or political subdivision*  
 331 *or other entity, acting at the direction of the Coordinator of Emergency Management, in and for preventing*  
 332 *and mitigating damage, loss, hardship, or suffering due to anticipated impacts of an imminent emergency*  
 333 *necessitating a gubernatorial declaration of a state of preparedness, or an emergency that does not warrant*  
 334 *a gubernatorial declaration of a state of emergency; and*

335 *2. For procurement, maintenance, and replenishment of materials, equipment, and supplies, in such*  
 336 *quantities and at such location as the Coordinator of Emergency Management may deem necessary to ensure*  
 337 *readiness and protect the public peace, health, and safety and to preserve the lives and property and*  
 338 *economic well-being of the people of the Commonwealth prior to and during an imminent emergency*  
 339 *necessitating a gubernatorial declaration of a state of preparedness or an emergency that does not warrant a*  
 340 *gubernatorial declaration of a state of emergency.*

341 *The Coordinator of Emergency Management shall promptly seek reimbursement from any person causing*  
 342 *or contributing to an emergency or disaster for all sums disbursed from the fund for the protection, relief,*  
 343 *and recovery from loss or damage caused by such person. In the event a request for reimbursement is not*  
 344 *paid within 60 days of receipt of a written demand, the claim shall be referred to the Attorney General for*  
 345 *collection. The Coordinator of Emergency Management shall be allowed to recover all legal and court costs*  
 346 *and other expenses incident to such actions for collection. The Coordinator is authorized to recover any sums*  
 347 *incurred by any other state agency or political subdivision acting at the direction of the Coordinator as*  
 348 *provided in this paragraph.*

349 **§ 44-146.18:2. Authority of Coordinator of Emergency Management in undeclared emergency or**  
 350 **state of preparedness.**

351 In an emergency which does not warrant a gubernatorial declaration of a state of emergency *or state of*  
 352 *preparedness*, the Coordinator of Emergency Management, after consultation with and approval of the  
 353 Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security, may enter into contracts and incur obligations necessary  
 354 to prevent or alleviate damage, loss, hardship, or suffering caused by such emergency and to protect the  
 355 health and safety of persons and property. In exercising the powers vested by this section, the Coordinator  
 356 may proceed without regard to normal procedures pertaining to entering into contracts, incurring of  
 357 obligations, rental of equipment, purchase of supplies and materials, and expenditure of public funds;  
 358 however, mandatory constitutional requirements shall not be disregarded.

359 **§ 44-146.18:4. State Coordinator of Emergency Management responsible for annual Virginia**  
 360 **Comprehensive Emergency Management Report.**

361 A. The Department of Emergency Management (the Department) shall create a comprehensive tabulated  
 362 annual report, known as the Virginia Comprehensive Emergency Management Report (the Report), that shall  
 363 include the annual Threat Hazard Identification Risk and Assessment (THIRA) report that the Department  
 364 submits to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), as well as information on the following:

365 1. The current readiness of Virginia's search and rescue efforts;

366 2. The jurisdictions that received financial assistance during the prior fiscal year because they were  
 367 located in an area declared to be in a state of emergency *or state of preparedness*, but not declared to be a  
 368 major disaster area for which federal assistance was provided, and the amount each such jurisdiction

369 received;

370 3. The status of the Commonwealth's emergency shelter capabilities and readiness;

371 4. All assets received during the prior fiscal year as a result of a law-enforcement seizure and subsequent  
372 forfeiture by either a state or federal court and their estimated net worth;

373 5. The forfeiture of federal grant funding by any state agency that is required to return such funding as a  
374 result of not fulfilling the specifications of a grant;

375 6. The results of the annual statewide drill conducted by the Governor in accordance with § 44-146.17:2  
376 in preparation for a potential large-scale disaster;

377 7. The number and types of training and exercises related to man-made and natural disaster preparedness  
378 that were conducted by the Department, the costs associated with such training and exercises, and the  
379 challenges and barriers to ensuring that state and local agencies are able and ready to respond to emergencies  
380 and natural disasters;

381 8. The mandates administered by state agencies and imposed on local governments, an estimate of the  
382 fiscal impact of the mandates on the affected local governments, and a written justification as to why the  
383 mandate should or should not be eliminated;

384 9. The status of continuity of operations programs, plans, and systems of the Commonwealth's executive  
385 branch agencies. Such plans shall include a description of how the agency or institution of higher education  
386 will continue to provide essential services or perform mission essential functions during a disaster or other  
387 event that disrupts normal operations;

388 10. The state of the Commonwealth's emergency prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and  
389 recovery efforts and the resources necessary to implement them; and

390 11. The status of emergency management response plans throughout the Commonwealth and other  
391 measures taken or recommended to prevent, respond to, or recover from disasters, including acts of terrorism.  
392 Information submitted in accordance with the procedures set forth in subdivision 14 of § 2.2-3705.2 shall not  
393 be disclosed unless:

394 a. It is requested by law-enforcement authorities in furtherance of an official investigation or the  
395 prosecution of a criminal act;

396 b. The agency holding the record is served with a proper judicial order; or

397 c. The agency holding the record has obtained written consent to release the information from the  
398 Department.

399 B. The State Coordinator of Emergency Management shall compile and submit the Report to the Secretary  
400 of Public Safety and Homeland Security, and shall provide copies to the Chairmen of the Senate Committee  
401 on Finance and Appropriations, the Senate Committee for Courts of Justice, the House Committee on  
402 Appropriations, and the House Committee on Public Safety, by November 1 of each year. All state and local  
403 agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide information and assistance to the State Coordinator of  
404 Emergency Management, upon request.

405 C. The Report may, with the concurrence of the Governor, include sensitive information, which shall be  
406 excluded from disclosure in accordance with subdivisions 2, 3, 4, and 6 of § 2.2-3705.2 and which, if  
407 revealed publicly, would jeopardize or compromise security plans and procedures in the Commonwealth  
408 designed to protect (i) the public or (ii) public or private critical infrastructure. Any sensitive information  
409 presented to any committee of the General Assembly shall be discussed in a closed meeting as provided in  
410 subdivision A 19 of § 2.2-3711.

411 **§ 44-146.19. Powers and duties of political subdivisions.**

412 A. Each political subdivision within the Commonwealth shall be within the jurisdiction of and served by  
413 the Department of Emergency Management and be responsible for local disaster mitigation, preparedness,  
414 response, and recovery. Each political subdivision shall maintain in accordance with state disaster  
415 preparedness plans and programs an agency of emergency management which, except as otherwise provided  
416 under this chapter, has jurisdiction over and services the entire political subdivision.

417 B. Each political subdivision shall have a director of emergency management who, after the term of the  
418 person presently serving in this capacity has expired and in the absence of an executive order by the  
419 Governor, shall be the following:

420 1. In the case of a city, the mayor or city manager, who shall appoint a coordinator of emergency  
421 management with consent of council;

422 2. In the case of a county, a member of the board of supervisors selected by the board or the chief  
423 administrative officer for the county, who shall appoint a coordinator of emergency management with the  
424 consent of the governing body;

425 3. A coordinator of emergency management shall be appointed by the council of any town to ensure  
426 integration of its organization into the county emergency management organization;

427 4. In the case of the Towns of Chincoteague and West Point and of towns with a population in excess of  
428 5,000 having an emergency management organization separate from that of the county, the mayor or town  
429 manager shall appoint a coordinator of emergency services with consent of council;

430 5. In Smyth County and in York County, the chief administrative officer for the county shall appoint a

431 director of emergency management, with the consent of the governing body, who shall appoint a coordinator  
432 of emergency management with the consent of the governing body.

433 C. Whenever the Governor has declared a state of emergency *or state of preparedness*, each political  
434 subdivision within the disaster area may, under the supervision and control of the Governor or his designated  
435 representative, control, restrict, allocate, or regulate the use, sale, production, and distribution of food, fuel,  
436 clothing, and other commodities, materials, goods, services, and resource systems which fall only within the  
437 boundaries of that jurisdiction and which do not impact systems affecting adjoining or other political  
438 subdivisions, enter into contracts and incur obligations necessary to combat such threatened or actual disaster,  
439 protect the health and safety of persons and property, and provide emergency assistance to the victims of such  
440 disaster. In exercising the powers vested under this section, under the supervision and control of the  
441 Governor, the political subdivision may proceed without regard to time-consuming procedures and  
442 formalities prescribed by law (except mandatory constitutional requirements) pertaining to the performance  
443 of public work, entering into contracts, incurring of obligations, employment of temporary workers, rental of  
444 equipment, purchase of supplies and materials, levying of taxes, and appropriation and expenditure of public  
445 funds.

446 D. The director of each local organization for emergency management may, in collaboration with (i) other  
447 public and private agencies within the Commonwealth or (ii) other states or localities within other states,  
448 develop or cause to be developed mutual aid arrangements for reciprocal assistance in case of a disaster too  
449 great to be dealt with unassisted. Such arrangements shall be consistent with state plans and programs and it  
450 shall be the duty of each local organization for emergency management to render assistance in accordance  
451 with the provisions of such mutual aid arrangements. Except where a mutual aid arrangement for reciprocal  
452 assistance exists between localities, no locality shall prohibit another locality from providing emergency  
453 medical services across local boundaries solely on the basis of financial considerations.

454 E. Each local and interjurisdictional agency shall prepare and keep current a local or interjurisdictional  
455 emergency operations plan for its area. The plan shall include, but not be limited to, responsibilities of all  
456 local agencies and shall establish a chain of command, and a provision that the Department of Criminal  
457 Justice Services and the Virginia Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund shall be contacted immediately to  
458 deploy assistance in the event of an emergency as defined in the emergency response plan when there are  
459 victims as defined in § 19.2-11.01. The Department of Criminal Justice Services and the Virginia Criminal  
460 Injuries Compensation Fund shall be the lead coordinating agencies for those individuals determined to be  
461 victims, and the plan shall also contain current contact information for both agencies. Such plan shall also  
462 contain provisions to ensure that the plan is applied equitably and that the needs of minority and vulnerable  
463 communities are met during emergencies. Every four years, each local and interjurisdictional agency shall  
464 conduct a comprehensive review and revision of its emergency operations plan to ensure that the plan  
465 remains current, and the revised plan shall be formally adopted by the locality's governing body. In the case  
466 of an interjurisdictional agency, the plan shall be formally adopted by the governing body of each of the  
467 localities encompassed by the agency. Each political subdivision having a nuclear power station or other  
468 nuclear facility within 10 miles of its boundaries shall, if so directed by the Department of Emergency  
469 Management, prepare and keep current an appropriate emergency plan for its area for response to nuclear  
470 accidents at such station or facility.

471 F. All political subdivisions shall provide (i) an annually updated emergency management assessment and  
472 (ii) data related to emergency sheltering capabilities, including emergency shelter locations, evacuation  
473 zones, capacity by person, medical needs capacity, current wind rating, standards compliance, backup power,  
474 and lead agency for staffing, to the State Coordinator of Emergency Management on or before August 1 of  
475 each year.

476 G. By July 1, 2005, all localities with a population greater than 50,000 shall establish an alert and warning  
477 plan for the dissemination of adequate and timely warning to the public in the event of an emergency or  
478 threatened disaster. The governing body of the locality, in consultation with its local emergency management  
479 organization, shall amend its local emergency operations plan that may include rules for the operation of its  
480 alert and warning system, to include sirens, Emergency Alert System (EAS), NOAA Weather Radios, or  
481 other personal notification systems, amateur radio operators, or any combination thereof.

482 H. Localities that have established an agency of emergency management shall have authority to require  
483 the review of, and suggest amendments to, the emergency plans of nursing homes, assisted living facilities,  
484 adult day centers, and child day care centers that are located within the locality.

485 **§ 44-146.21. Declaration of local emergency.**

486 A. A local emergency may be declared by the local director of emergency management with the consent  
487 of the governing body of the political subdivision. In the event the governing body cannot convene due to the  
488 disaster or other exigent circumstances, the director, or in his absence, the deputy director, or in the absence  
489 of both the director and deputy director, any member of the governing body may declare the existence of a  
490 local emergency, subject to confirmation by the governing body at its next regularly scheduled meeting or at  
491 a special meeting within 45 days of the declaration, whichever occurs first. The governing body, when in its  
492 judgment all emergency actions have been taken, shall take appropriate action to end the declared emergency.

493 B. A declaration of a local emergency as defined in § 44-146.16 shall activate the local Emergency  
494 Operations Plan and authorize the furnishing of aid and assistance thereunder.

495 C. Whenever a local emergency has been declared, the director of emergency management of each  
496 political subdivision or any member of the governing body in the absence of the director, if so authorized by  
497 the governing body, may control, restrict, allocate or regulate the use, sale, production and distribution of  
498 food, fuel, clothing and other commodities, materials, goods, services and resource systems which fall only  
499 within the boundaries of that jurisdiction and which do not impact systems affecting adjoining or other  
500 political subdivisions, enter into contracts and incur obligations necessary to combat such threatened or actual  
501 disaster, protect the health and safety of persons and property and provide emergency assistance to the  
502 victims of such disaster, and proceed without regard to time-consuming procedures and formalities prescribed  
503 by law (except mandatory constitutional requirements) pertaining to the performance of public work, entering  
504 into contracts, incurring of obligations, employment of temporary workers, rental of equipment, purchase of  
505 supplies and materials, and other expenditures of public funds, provided such funds in excess of  
506 appropriations in the current approved budget, unobligated, are available. Whenever the Governor has  
507 declared a state of emergency *or state of preparedness*, each political subdivision affected may, under the  
508 supervision and control of the Governor or his designated representative, enter into contracts and incur  
509 obligations necessary to combat such threatened or actual disaster beyond the capabilities of local  
510 government, protect the health and safety of persons and property and provide emergency assistance to the  
511 victims of such disaster. In exercising the powers vested under this section, under the supervision and control  
512 of the Governor, the political subdivision may proceed without regard to time-consuming procedures and  
513 formalities prescribed by law pertaining to public work, entering into contracts, incurring of obligations,  
514 employment of temporary workers, rental of equipment, purchase of supplies and materials, levying of taxes,  
515 and appropriation and expenditure of public funds.

516 D. No interjurisdictional agency or official thereof may declare a local emergency. However, an  
517 interjurisdictional agency of emergency management shall provide aid and services to the affected political  
518 subdivision authorizing such assistance in accordance with the agreement as a result of a local or state  
519 declaration.

520 E. None of the provisions of this chapter shall apply to the Emergency Disaster Relief provided by the  
521 American Red Cross or other relief agency solely concerned with the provision of service at no cost to the  
522 citizens of the Commonwealth.

523 **§ 44-146.28. Authority of Governor and agencies under his control in declared state of emergency**  
524 **or state of preparedness.**

525 A. In the case of a declaration of a state of emergency as defined in § 44-146.16, the Governor is  
526 authorized to expend from all funds of the state treasury not constitutionally restricted, a sum sufficient.  
527 Allotments from such sum sufficient may be made by the Governor to any state agency or political  
528 subdivision of the Commonwealth to carry out disaster service missions and responsibilities. Allotments may  
529 also be made by the Governor from the sum sufficient to provide financial assistance to eligible applicants  
530 located in an area declared to be in a state of emergency, but not declared to be a major disaster area for  
531 which federal assistance might be forthcoming. This shall be considered as a program of last resort for those  
532 local jurisdictions that cannot meet the full cost.

533 *In the case of a declaration of a state of preparedness, as defined in § 44-146.16, the Governor is*  
534 *authorized to expend allotments from the Cardinal Disaster Relief Fund. Allotments from the Cardinal*  
535 *Disaster Relief Fund may be made by the Governor to any state agency or political subdivision of the*  
536 *Commonwealth to carry out disaster preparedness service missions and responsibilities.*

537 The Virginia Department of Emergency Management shall establish guidelines and procedures for  
538 determining whether and to what extent financial assistance to local governments may be provided.

539 The guidelines and procedures shall include the following:

540 1. Participants may be eligible to receive financial assistance to cover a percentage of eligible costs if they  
541 demonstrate that they are incapable of covering the full cost. The percentage may vary, based on the  
542 Commission on Local Government's fiscal stress index. The cumulative effect of recent disasters during the  
543 preceding twelve months may also be considered for eligibility purposes.

544 2. Only eligible participants that have sustained an emergency or disaster as defined in § 44-146.16 with  
545 total eligible costs of \$4 or more per capita may receive assistance, except that (i) any town with a total  
546 population of less than 3,500 shall be eligible for disaster assistance for incurred eligible damages of \$15,000  
547 or greater and (ii) any town with a population of 3,500 or more, but less than 5,000 shall be eligible for  
548 disaster assistance for incurred eligible damages of \$20,000 or greater and (iii) any town with a population of  
549 5,000 or greater with total eligible costs of \$4 or more per capita may receive assistance. No site or facility  
550 may be included with less than \$1,000 in eligible costs. However, the total cost of debris clearance may be  
551 considered as costs associated with a single site.

552 3. Eligible participants shall be fully covered by all-risk property and flood insurance policies, including  
553 provisions for insuring the contents of the property and business interruptions, or shall be self-insured, in  
554 order to be eligible for this assistance. Insurance deductibles shall not be covered by this program.

555 4. Eligible costs incurred by towns, public service authorities, volunteer fire departments, and volunteer  
556 emergency medical services agencies may be included in a county's or city's total costs.

557 5. Unless otherwise stated in guidelines and procedures, eligible costs are defined as those listed in the  
558 Public Assistance component of P.L. 93-288, as amended, excluding beach replenishment and snow removal.

559 6. State agencies, as directed by the Virginia Department of Emergency Management, shall conduct an  
560 on-site survey to validate damages and to document restoration costs.

561 7. Eligible participants shall maintain complete documentation of all costs in a manner approved by the  
562 Auditor of Public Accounts and shall provide copies of the documentation to the Virginia Department of  
563 Emergency Management upon request.

564 If a jurisdiction meets the criteria set forth in the guidelines and procedures, but is in an area that has  
565 neither been declared to be in a state of emergency nor been declared to be a major disaster area for which  
566 federal assistance might be forthcoming, the Governor is authorized, in his discretion, to make an allotment  
567 from the sum sufficient to that jurisdiction without a declaration of a state of emergency, in the same manner  
568 as if a state of emergency declaration had been made.

569 The Governor shall report to the Chairmen of the Senate Committee on Finance and Appropriations, the  
570 House Committee on Appropriations, and the House Committee on Finance within 30 days of authorizing the  
571 sum sufficient pursuant to this section.

572 B. Public agencies under the supervision and control of the Governor may implement their emergency  
573 assignments without regard to normal procedures, except mandatory constitutional requirements, pertaining  
574 to the performance of public work, entering into contracts, incurring of obligations, employment of temporary  
575 workers, rental of equipment, purchase of supplies and materials, and expenditures of public funds.

576 C. *An executive order declaring a state of preparedness pursuant to § 44-146.17 shall have the same*  
577 *effect as a declaration of a state of emergency for purposes of the Emergency Management Assistance*  
578 *Compact as provided by § 44-146.28:1 and mutual aid arrangements pursuant to § 44-146.19.*

579 D. Allotments may be made by the Governor from a sum sufficient to provide financial assistance to  
580 Virginia state agencies and political subdivisions responding to a declared state of emergency in another state  
581 as provided by § 44-146.17, whether or not a state of emergency *or state of preparedness* is declared in the  
582 Commonwealth pursuant to § 44-146.16.

583 ~~D.~~ E. Allotments may be made by the Governor from a sum sufficient for the deployment of personnel  
584 and materials for the Virginia National Guard and the Virginia Defense Force to prepare for a response to any  
585 of the circumstances set forth in subdivisions A 1 through 5 of § 44-75.1, whether or not a state of emergency  
586 *or state of preparedness* is declared in the Commonwealth pursuant to § 44-146.16. However, preparation  
587 authorized by this subsection shall be limited to the deployment of no more than 300 personnel and shall be  
588 limited to no more than five days, unless a state of emergency *or state of preparedness* is declared.