

2026 Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 455

BY REPRESENTATIVE CARVER

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS: Provides relative to the definition of "first responder"

1 AN ACT

2 To amend and reenact R.S. 23:1017.1(6) and to enact R.S. 29:723(21) and 724(I), relative  
3 to the definition of first responder; to include employees of a public works  
4 department in the definition of first responder; to provide for the duties of a public  
5 works employee as a first responder; to provide for limitations on the use of a public  
6 works employee during an emergency; to limit the impact of their participation on  
7 certain rights and benefits; to authorize the training of public works employees for  
8 emergency preparedness; and to provide for related matters.

9 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

10 Section 1. R.S. 23:1017.1(6) is hereby amended and reenacted to read as follows:

11 §1017.1. Definitions

12 Unless the context clearly indicates otherwise, the following words and  
13 terms, when used in this Part, shall have the following meanings:

14 \* \* \*

15 (6) "First responder" means a volunteer engaged in activities involving the  
16 Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness pursuant to  
17 R.S. 29:721 et seq., and first responders as defined in R.S. 29:723 including but not  
18 limited to medical personnel, emergency and medical technicians, volunteer firemen,  
19 auxiliary law enforcement officers, state agency essential workers, emergency  
20 service dispatchers, emergency response operators, electrical linemen and public

1 works first responders as defined by R.S. 29:723, and members of the Civil Air  
2 Patrol.

3 \* \* \*

4 Section 2. R.S. 29:723(21) and 724(I) are hereby enacted to read as follows:

5 §723. Definitions

6 As used in this Chapter:

7 \* \* \*

8 (21) "Public works first responder" means a state, parish, or municipal  
9 employee whose primary duties include public infrastructure operations,  
10 maintenance, or repair, including but not limited to transportation, roads and bridges,  
11 drainage, utilities, water and wastewater systems, fleet operations, solid waste, and  
12 facilities maintenance, who is required to perform emergency response functions  
13 during a declared emergency or disaster.

14 \* \* \*

15 §724. Powers of the governor

16 \* \* \*

17 I.(1) Public works first responders are hereby recognized as essential  
18 emergency response personnel and shall be integrated into state and local emergency  
19 preparedness, response, and recovery operations, including but not limited to all of  
20 the following:

21 (a) Incident command and emergency operations center coordination.

22 (b) Debris clearance, infrastructure stabilization, and emergency repairs.

23 (c) Support of evacuation, sheltering, and reentry operations.

24 (d) Mutual aid and intergovernmental emergency response activities.

25 (2) Public works first responders may be issued emergency credentials and  
26 identification for access to restricted areas during declared emergencies.

27 (3) The designation of public works employees as first responders pursuant  
28 to this Section is for emergency operations, coordination, and recognition purposes  
29 only.



Proposed law provides that a public works first responder will be considered first responders only during weather emergencies as declared by the governor pursuant to R.S. 29:721 et seq. Further provides that nothing in proposed law alters the employee's eligibility for retirement systems or retirement benefits; creates presumptions related to workers' compensation or occupational disease; mandates hazard pay, premium pay, or additional compensation; or expands civil service classifications or collective bargaining rights.

Proposed law includes public works first responders in emergency preparedness training, exercises, and planning activities coordinated by the GOHSEP and local emergency management agencies, provided there are available resources.

(Amends R.S. 23:1017.1(6); Adds R.S. 29:723(21) and 724(I))