

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,

1 auxiliary law enforcement officers, state agency essential workers, emergency  
2 service dispatchers, emergency response operators, electrical linemen and public  
3 works first responders as defined by R.S. 29:723, and members of the Civil Air  
4 Patrol.

5 \* \* \*

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

7 §723. Definitions

8 As used in this Chapter:

9 \* \* \*

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

16 \* \* \*

17 §724. Powers of the governor

18 \* \* \*

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

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

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

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

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

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

- 1           (3) The designation of public works employees as first responders pursuant
- 2           to this Section is for emergency operations, coordination, and recognition purposes
- 3           only.
- 4           (4) Nothing in this Section shall be construed to:
- 5           (a) Alter eligibility for retirement systems or retirement benefits.
- 6           (b) Create presumptions related to workers' compensation or occupational
- 7           disease.
- 8           (c) Mandate hazard pay, premium pay, or additional compensation.
- 9           (d) Expand civil service classifications or collective bargaining rights.
- 10          (5) Any expansion of compensation, retirement, or benefits related to this
- 11          designation shall require separate and explicit legislative authorization.
- 12          (6) Public works first responders are eligible for inclusion in emergency
- 13          preparedness training, exercises, and planning activities coordinated by the
- 14          Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness and local
- 15          emergency management agencies, subject to available resources.

DIGEST

The digest printed below was prepared by House Legislative Services. It constitutes no part of the legislative instrument. The keyword, one-liner, abstract, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

HB 455 Engrossed

2026 Regular Session

Carver

**Abstract:** Provides relative to public works employees acting as first responders during an emergency.

Present law with regard to the La. Homeland Security and Emergency Assistance and Disaster Act, defines "first responder" as a volunteer engaged in activities involving the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP) pursuant to R.S. 29:721 et seq., and first responders as defined in R.S. 29:723, including medical personnel, emergency and medical technicians, volunteer firemen, auxiliary law enforcement officers, state agency essential workers, emergency service dispatchers, and emergency response operators, and members of the Civil Air Patrol.

Present law provides that "first responder" refers to those individuals who in the early stages of an incident are responsible for the protection and preservation of life, property, evidence, and the environment, as well as emergency management, public health, clinical care, public works, and other skilled support personnel, such as equipment operators that provide immediate support services during prevention, response, and recovery operations consistent with Homeland Security Presidential Directive 8.

Proposed law includes public works employees in the definition of "first responder".

Proposed law defines "public works first responder" as a state, parish, or municipal employee whose primary duties include public infrastructure operations, maintenance, or repair, who is required to perform emergency response functions during a declared emergency or disaster.

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))