
DIGEST

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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))