



Kansas Emergency Management Association

House Appropriations Committee
January 24, 2024
HB 2468

Kansas Emergency Managers Association Opponent Testimony

Chairman Waymaster and members of the Committee:

Thank you for allowing the Kansas Emergency Managers Association to offer opponent testimony on HB 2468, which would drastically change how emergencies are managed and the structure under which that is done.

The Kansas Emergency Managers Association and its members oppose this legislation in its current form due to several issues with terminology, process, selective application of types of disasters and the role that emergency managers play in the response and recovery phases of a disaster. KEMA believes that these issues would have unintended consequences and would ultimately hinder the ability of a community to respond to and recover from a disaster.

One of the basic tenets of emergency management is that we develop and apply an “all hazards” approach to supporting response agencies and the public. HB 2468 calls out specific actions to be applied to “weather related” events, and we would find this to be exceedingly problematic both in the actions this bill dictates and would require emergency managers to take on many roles and responsibilities outside the scope of our positions.

For example, an element in HB 2468 that is outside the scope of emergency management is assisting the public with insurance claims. There are many more qualified groups and individuals that can address these concerns. We often address the logistics of setting up a “service center” where the public can apply for and receive assistance of various kinds as the individual requires but rarely, if ever, directly provide this type of assistance.

The requirement for the Governor’s proclamation of a state of disaster emergency to be valid for only 15 days without the legislature's ratification is also an issue. This can cause resources to be less available or to be financially fully burdened to the requesting jurisdiction as it would possibly impact the ability to request reimbursement opportunities for events outside that time frame.

John Stradal, KCEM – President
Keri Korthals, KCEM – Secretary
Nelson Casteel, KCEM – NE VP
Rex Beemer, KCEM – SW VP

Kathleen Fabrizius, KCEM – Past President
Laurie Harrison, KCEM – Treasurer
David Dohe, KCEM – NC VP

Jillian Rodrigue, KCEM – President-Elect
Mickie Helberg, KCEM – NW VP
Mike Loreg, KCEM – SC VP
Melanie Kent-Culp, KCEM – SE VP

Another key issue is the selection of an Incident Commander. The incident commander is the person responsible for all aspects of an emergency response; including quickly developing incident objectives, managing all incident operations, application of resources as well as responsibility for all persons involved. The organization or jurisdiction with primary responsibility for the incident designates the Incident Commander and the process for transferring command. The incident commander is selected based on the role of the responding agency, the skills of the individual and their experience with this particular event. It is done without regard to an individual's rank or role in their agency on a day-to-day basis but much more so on their ability to direct a best possible response. Deviation from this process would be very problematic.

The membership of KEMA does find some elements of HB 2468 in a positive light but, as a whole, in its current configuration, we respectfully ask that the committee reject this legislation.

Thank you.

Matt May
Chair, Government Affairs and Legislative Liaison
Kansas Emergency Managers Association
mmay@wycokck.org
(913) 645-6582

John Stradal, KCEM – President
Keri Korthals, KCEM – Secretary
Nelson Casteel, KCEM – NE VP
Rex Beemer, KCEM – SW VP

Kathleen Fabrizius, KCEM – Past President
Laurie Harrison, KCEM – Treasurer
David Dohe, KCEM – NC VP

Jillian Rodrigue, KCEM – President-Elect
Mickie Helberg, KCEM – NW VP
Mike Loreg, KCEM – SC VP
Melanie Kent-Culp, KCEM – SE VP