

HB 2520 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Veterans, Emergency Management, Federal and World Affairs

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Meeting Dates: 5/4, 5/9

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Creates a Class A violation of reckless interference with an aircraft if a person operating a drone recklessly interferes with wildfire suppression, law enforcement or emergency response efforts. The measure designates intentional interference with wildfire suppression, law enforcement or emergency response efforts as a Class A misdemeanor.

FISCAL: Minimal fiscal impact

REVENUE: No revenue impact

HOUSE VOTE: 56-0-3-1

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Questions surrounding the operation of drones during emergencies like structural and wildland fire response efforts
- Potential air space conflicts
- Community and emergency response safety

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

Unmanned aircraft systems, commonly called drones, have occasionally interfered with fire repression and emergency response efforts in Oregon. The U.S. Forest Service reported two instances of drone interference with wildfire suppression efforts in Oregon in 2016 and 2017. In September 2022, the Oregon Department of Forestry's Southwest Oregon District Office temporarily suspended a helicopter structural fire response due to drone interference.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulates the national airspace, and drones are considered aircraft under federal jurisdiction of the FAA. Federal law (49 U.S.C. § 46320) prohibits knowingly or recklessly interfering with wildfire suppression, law enforcement, or emergency response efforts by operation of unmanned aircraft.

House Bill 2520 establishes reckless causation of interference with wildfire suppression, law enforcement or emergency response efforts by a person that possesses or controls an unmanned aircraft system a Class A violation and a Class A misdemeanor.