

- SUBJECT:** Emergency management plans for water utilities in Harris County
- COMMITTEE:** Natural Resources — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 11 ayes — Ritter, T. King, Beck, Creighton, Hopson, Keffer, Larson, Lucio, Martinez Fischer, D. Miller, Price
- 0 nays
- WITNESSES:** For — Ed Emmett, Harris County Judge’s Office and Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management
- Against — None
- BACKGROUND:** In 2009, following a devastating hurricane season, the Legislature enacted SB 361 by Patrick, which amended the Water Code to require water utilities in Harris County to prepare an emergency plan for the provision of service during an extended power outage as soon as safe and practicable after a natural disaster.
- Under current law, the water utilities in Harris County are required to submit a copy of their emergency preparedness plan and their emergency contact information to the county judge, the office of emergency management in the county, the Public Utility Commission, and the Governor’s Office of Emergency Management.
- DIGEST:** CSHB 2619 would remove the requirement that water utilities in Harris County submit a copy of their emergency preparedness plan and the utility’s emergency contact information to the county judge. Instead, it would require that they submit the information to the water utility’s retail electric provider and transmission and distribution service provider.
- The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2011.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

CSHB 2619 would remove the county judge from the duty of receiving emergency plans from water utilities in Harris County that are required to submit them. The bill would require that utilities instead provide a copy of their emergency preparedness plan and their emergency contact information to their retail electric provider and their transmission and distribution service provider. The Harris County judge currently receives stacks of plans that are then sent on to the retail electric providers. There is no reason for the county judge to be in the middle. Current law also already requires that the plans go to the county emergency management planner, which in Harris County is the county judge, who now actually receives two copies of the plans.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

No apparent opposition.

NOTES:

The committee substitute made non-substantive revisions to the original version of the bill.

A related bill, HB 805 by Callegari, which would apply the same emergency preparedness reporting requirements for water utilities in Fort Bend County as for Harris County, passed the House on the Local, Consent, and Resolutions Calendar on March 30 and was referred to the Senate Transportation and Homeland Security Committee on April 13.