

**REVENUE: No revenue impact**

**FISCAL: No fiscal impact**

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**Action:** Do Pass as Amended and Be Printed Engrossed

**Vote:** 3 - 1 - 1

**Yeas:** Edwards C., Girod, Riley

**Nays:** Thatcher

**Exc.:** Beyer

**Prepared By:** Patrick Brennan, Administrator

**Meeting Dates:** 2/20, 2/22, 3/15

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**WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:** Requires that individuals or groups traveling above 10,000 feet on Mt. Hood between November and March be equipped a two-way signaling device and at least one specified electronic device to aid in location.

**ISSUES DISCUSSED:**

- Importance of volunteer efforts in rescue operations
- Best practices in search and rescue operations
- Past instances of rescue operations and loss of life on Mt. Hood
- Comparable benefits of different devices and technologies that can aid in rescue operations
- Economic benefits of mountaineering tourism
- Activities of the Governor's Search and Rescue Task Force
- Enforcement mechanism in ORS 401.590
- Potential for encouraging risk-taking and/or lack of self reliance

**EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT:** Replaces bill; requires individuals or groups ascending above 10,000 feet on Mt. Hood between November and March to carry a two-way communication device and one of the following: global positioning system receiver, personal locator beacon transmitter, mountain locator unit, or other comparable device.

**BACKGROUND:** Every year a number of hikers and climbers become lost or involved in accidents on mountains in Oregon. A recent example that received national attention was the plight of three climbers who set out December 7, 2006, to scale the north face climbing route to the summit of Mount Hood. The climbers were reported missing on December 10<sup>th</sup>, and a family member received a cell phone call but said the connection was poor and failed after a short time. Following a lengthy search that was hampered by inclement weather on the mountain, one of the climbers was found dead in a snow cave on December 17<sup>th</sup>; the other two members of the party remain missing, and rescue operations have since given way to recovery operations.

The cost of search and rescue operations varies from case to case; the December 2006 operation was estimated by Hood River County between \$5,000-6,500 per day. Oregon law does not require climbers to pay for rescue efforts unless they were negligent and failed to take basic steps to keep themselves safe or violated an applicable law (ORS 401.590). House Bill 2509-A would require that individuals or groups ascending above 10,000 feet on Mt. Hood carry a two-way communications device (typically a cell phone, satellite phone, or radio), and one of the following: a global positioning system (GPS) receiver, a personal locator beacon (PLB) transmitter, a mountain locator unit (MLU), or other comparable device.

3/20/2007 8:31:00 AM

*This summary has not been adopted or officially endorsed by action of the committee.*