

Representative Grayber  
Chair  
House Committee on Emergency Management, General Government Veterans and Emergency  
Preparedness  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court Street  
Salem, OR 97301

Chair Grayber and Members of the House Committee on Emergency Management, General Government,  
Veterans and Emergency Preparedness

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of HB2484 which will better prepare Oregon communities for those emergencies that may require specialized training such as structural collapse, trench rescue, high angle rope rescue and confined space. Our fire service takes great pride in our commitment to the communities we serve and we want to be prepared to respond to whatever alarm may arise.

Following the financial downturn in 2008, the Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) teams in Eugene and Springfield did what they could to maintain their equipment and required training. The merge of the two departments into one (Eugene Springfield Fire) extended the capabilities of the team. However, it did not take long for the cost of training requirements and equipment to exceed the funding provided by the cities. Our Technical Rescue Team lost a number of highly trained personnel through promotion and retirement without the funding to train new members to the same level. The team is now fighting to maintain their certifications. The majority of members now have limited training in building collapse or trench rescue. These are technical areas that require specific training and certification, as well as ongoing training.

The assistance our firefighters are asking for is an identified weakness throughout the state. While we do want to be prepared for catastrophic events such as a Cascadia earthquake, it is important to realize that these emergencies are happening right now. Utility workers are operating in trenches. There are mudslides, building collapses, sinkholes, industrial accidents and cliff rescues. Our need isn't only for something that might happen in the future. Our request in this bill is also for what we are facing now.

The response of USAR Technical Rescue Teams is a regional consideration. The Eugene Springfield Fire Technical Rescue Team is regularly requested outside of our area through mutual aid request. It is recognized that in the event of a large-scale emergency our best path for success would be for the state to have multiple prepared teams in separate regions, ready to respond locally or to be activated to assist elsewhere in the state. By creating a regional typed team, additional specialties such as Swift Water Rescue, Medical and HAZMAT would work together to create a more robust and diversified response. An Oregon Urban Search and Rescue program could lead to an overall increase in capability for a multidisciplinary statewide resource.

HB2484, is seen as the first step for Oregon to be better prepared and lays the foundation for a coordinated measurable USAR response.

Thank you for your consideration.

Wayne Morris  
Battalion Chief,  
Eugene Springfield Fire

