

Senate Fiscal Agency  
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**SFA****BILL ANALYSIS**

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House Bill 5237 (Substitute S-2 as reported)  
Sponsor: Representative Gerald Law  
House Committee: Education  
Senate Committee: Education

Date Completed: 3-4-98

### **RATIONALE**

Currently, the Fire Prevention Code requires schools to conduct at least 10 fire drills during each school year. Reportedly, some schools also conduct severe weather drills, but most do not. Unlike a fire drill, in which pupils are taken outside, severe weather drills are conducted inside a building. During a tornado warning, for example, students evidently are supposed to kneel along interior building walls with a book covering their heads. In some schools, however, teachers and administrators might not know the difference between a fire alarm and a tornado warning, or know the proper procedures to take during severe weather. According to the *Grand Rapids Press*, in September 1997 some junior and senior high school teachers mistook a tornado warning for a fire alarm and led students outside, while other teachers continued to hold classes. To prevent similar occurrences in the future, and to safeguard students during severe weather, it has been suggested that schools should be required to conduct tornado drills, as well as fire drills.

### **CONTENT**

**The bill would amend the Fire Prevention Code to require that at least eight, rather than 10, fire drills be conducted during each school year, and to require a minimum of two tornado safety drills each school year.**

The Code provides that the chief administrative officer and the teachers of all schools, colleges, and universities, and the owner or the owner's representative of all school dormitories, must have a fire drill each month. A minimum of 10 drills is required for each school year. If weather conditions do not permit fire drills to be held at least once a month, then at least six fire drills must be held in the fall and four during the rest of the school year.

The bill would require a minimum of eight fire drills for each school year. If weather conditions did not permit fire drills to be held at least once a month, then at least five would have to be held in the fall and three during the remainder of the school year.

The bill also provides that a minimum of two tornado safety drills would be required for each school year at the schools and facilities described above. These drills would have to be conducted for the purpose of preventing fires and related hazards and injuries caused by severe weather.

MCL 29.19

### **ARGUMENTS**

*(Please note: The arguments contained in this analysis originate from sources outside the Senate Fiscal Agency. The Senate Fiscal Agency neither supports nor opposes legislation.)*

#### **Supporting Argument**

Tornados present a serious threat to life and property throughout Michigan. According to the testimony of a professional meteorologist, Michigan is part of an area in the United States that receives 90% to 95% of the world's tornados. Reportedly, a study conducted for the period of 1953 to 1995 revealed that Michigan ranked eighth nationally in terms of the severity of tornados, and fourth in total tornado-related deaths. Although there is no guarantee of surviving a direct hit by a tornado, there are many safety measures that can dramatically improve one's chances. Schools have a responsibility to protect pupils from tornados, and teachers should know what to do in the event of severe weather. By requiring that schools conduct at least two tornado safety drills each school year, the bill could help to prevent a disaster.

Legislative Analyst: S. Lowe

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

The bill would have no fiscal impact on State or local government.

Fiscal Analyst: E. Pratt

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This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan Senate staff for use by the Senate in its deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.