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[HF 683](#) – Fire Districts (LSB1772HV)  
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Fiscal Note Version – New

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**Description**

[House File 683](#) repeals the pilot program for emergency response districts under Iowa Code chapter [357J](#) and replaces the pilot program with a new government entity under the same name. The Bill further requires a city in which a Regents institution is located to maintain a fire department separate from the city’s police department.

**Background**

The pilot program for emergency response districts was established under 2008 Iowa Acts, chapter [1152](#). As of FY 2021, there are no known districts levying for property taxes under this pilot program.

Beginning in 2005, the city of Cedar Falls began transitioning toward a public safety model in which employees are cross-trained and certified as both police officers and fire fighters. This model is referred to as a public safety officer (PSO) model. Since 2016, all new hires to the Public Safety Services office are trained as PSOs. In March 2020, the Cedar Falls City Council voted to require the remaining fire fighters on staff to move toward being certified under the PSO model.

The University of Northern Iowa (UNI), a Regents institution, is located in Cedar Falls. In an agreement with the city, UNI pays 16.0% of the city’s net annual fire department expenses. In FY 2020, UNI paid \$564,000 in fire department-related expenses.

**Assumptions**

It is not known if any emergency response districts will be established under the provisions of this Bill.

To comply with the Bill provisions requiring a city with a Regents institution to maintain a fire department separate from the city’s police department, the city of Cedar Falls may need to reorganize the city’s Public Safety Services office into two separate departments. Public safety costs are primarily paid from the city’s general fund, or the \$8.10 levy, which may increase property taxes.

**Fiscal Impact**

The city of Cedar Falls estimates that under the provisions of this Bill, to provide the same service and personal response under separate departments will increase public safety budget costs by \$2.0 million per year.

For estimation purposes, it is assumed the increase will be spread proportionally across the fire and police departments’ budgets. Based on FY 2021 budget estimates, UNI’s expenses for fire department costs will increase by \$112,000 (19.9%) per year.

**Sources**

Department of Management  
City of Cedar Falls, Public Safety Services Office  
City of Cedar Falls, FY21 Budget Highlights by Division  
Board of Regents

/s/ Holly M. Lyons

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March 8, 2021

Doc ID 1214332

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The fiscal note for this Bill was prepared pursuant to [Joint Rule 17](#) and the Iowa Code. Data used in developing this fiscal note is available from the Fiscal Services Division of the Legislative Services Agency upon request.

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