

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2025

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HOUSE BILL 895

Short Title: Emergency Citizen Pilot Training Program. (Public)

Sponsors: Representatives Winslow, Balkcom, Bell, and Gillespie (Primary Sponsors).

For a complete list of sponsors, refer to the North Carolina General Assembly web site.

Referred to: Emergency Management and Disaster Recovery, if favorable, Finance, if favorable, Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House

April 14, 2025

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT TO ESTABLISH AN EMERGENCY CITIZEN PILOT TRAINING PROGRAM.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1. Chapter 166A of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new Article to read:

"Article 7.

"North Carolina Emergency Citizen Pilot Training Program.

"§ 166A-70. Purpose; establishment.

Purpose; Establishment. – There is hereby established the Emergency Citizen Pilot Training Program within the Division of Emergency Management of the Department of Public Safety. The purpose of the Program is to set standards and certification for citizen pilots to assist emergency response and recovery operations after declared disasters. The Director of Emergency Management shall administer the Program within the Division.

"§ 166A-71. Definitions.

Definitions. – The following definitions apply in this Article:

(1) Department. – The Department of Public Safety.

(2) Director. – The Director of the Division.

(3) Division. – The Division of Emergency Management of the Department of Public Safety.

(4) Emergency citizen pilot. – An individual who has been awarded and maintains a certificate from the Program.

(5) Program. – The Emergency Citizen Pilot Training Program.

(6) State Emergency Response Team. – As defined in G.S. 166A-19.3.

"§ 166A-72. Program criteria.

(a) Program. – The Program shall offer classes and training courses to train emergency citizen pilots on how to do all of the following:

(1) Assist State and federal emergency response and recovery operations after declared disasters within an emergency area.

(2) Establish levels of assistance and discretion between State and federal response activities and the role of private assistance by air to emergency areas.

(3) The most efficient and safe methods for private assistance by air in emergency areas, including flight paths, restricted airspace, standard operation procedures, permissible aircraft, emergency communication, and coordination of efforts.



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(4) Any other metrics or standards the Division deems necessary.

(b) Fee. – The Division may charge a reasonable fee to participate in the Program. The fee shall cover costs and shall not exceed five hundred dollars (\$500.00) per candidate.

(c) Candidates. – After graduation from the Program, candidates will receive a certification that allows the pilot to sign up for the Emergency Citizen Pilot Registry established by this Article.

(d) Registry. – The Division shall maintain and update an Emergency Citizen Pilot Registry that lists all certificated emergency citizen pilots who have an active or inactive certificate awarded by the Program.

(e) Continuing Training. – An emergency citizen pilot shall be deemed "active status" if the individual has been awarded a certificate and maintains any required continuing training hours necessary as determined by the Division. The Division shall maintain continuing training requirements for all emergency citizen pilots who have been issued a certificate under the Program, unless the certificate has lapsed and the emergency citizen pilot is in "inactive status." The Division shall develop criteria to develop certificate status and continuing training requirements.

"§ 166A-73. Coordination.

Coordination. – The Division shall work with the State Emergency Response Team, units of local governments, the Civil Air Patrol Section of the Department, other State agencies, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency to develop standards, criteria, best practices, safety standards, and any other criteria necessary in the discretion of the Division to integrate emergency citizen pilot training into the North Carolina Emergency Operations Plan and other disaster response plans."

SECTION 2. G.S. 166A-19.76 reads as rewritten:

"§ 166A-19.76. Leave options for voluntary firefighters, rescue squad workers, emergency citizen pilots, and emergency medical service personnel called into service.

(a) Leave Without Pay. – A member of a volunteer fire department, rescue squad, emergency citizen pilot, or emergency medical services agency called into service of the State after a declaration of a state of emergency by the Governor or by the General Assembly, or upon the activation of the State Emergency Response Team in response to an emergency, shall have the right to take leave without pay from his or her civilian employment. No member of a volunteer fire department, rescue squad, emergency citizen pilot, or emergency medical services agency shall be forced to use or exhaust his or her vacation or other accrued leave from his or her civilian employment for a period of active service. The choice of leave shall be solely within the discretion of the member.

(b) Request in Writing Required. – For the volunteer member to be entitled to take leave without pay pursuant to this section, his or her services shall be requested in writing by the Director of the Division or by the head of a local emergency management agency. The request shall be directed to the Chief of the member's volunteer fire department, rescue squad, emergency citizen pilot, or emergency medical services agency, and a copy shall be provided to the member's employer. This section shall not apply to those members whose services have been certified by their employer to the Director of the Division, or to the head of a local emergency management agency, as essential to the employer's own ongoing emergency relief activities.

(c) Definition of an Emergency Requiring Activation of the State Emergency Response Team. – For purposes of this section, an emergency requiring the activation of the State Emergency Response Team means an emergency at Activation Level 2 or greater according to the North Carolina State Emergency Operations Plan of November 2002. Activation Level 2 requires the State Emergency Operations Center to be fully activated with 24-hour staffing from all State Emergency Response Team members.

(d) Enforcement. – The Commissioner of Labor shall enforce the provisions of this section pursuant to Chapter 95 of the General Statutes."

1 **SECTION 3.** G.S. 166A-19.60(e) reads as rewritten:

2 "(e) Definition of Emergency Management Worker. – As used in this section, the term
3 "emergency management worker" shall include any full or part-time paid, volunteer, or auxiliary
4 employee of this State or other states, territories, possessions, or the District of Columbia, of the
5 federal government or any neighboring country or of any political subdivision thereof, or of any
6 agency or organization performing emergency management ~~services~~services, including
7 emergency citizen pilots with active status certification, at any place in this State, subject to the
8 order or control of or pursuant to a request of the State government or any political subdivision
9 thereof. The term "emergency management worker" under this section shall also include any
10 health care worker performing health care services as a member of a hospital-based or
11 county-based State Medical Assistance Team designated by the North Carolina Office of
12 Emergency Medical Services and any person performing emergency health care services under
13 G.S. 90-12.2."

14 **SECTION 4.** The Department of Public Safety, Division of Emergency
15 Management, shall adopt rules to implement the provisions of this act. The Division shall have
16 the Emergency Citizen Pilot Training Program operational by January 1, 2027. The Division
17 shall report to the Joint Legislative Emergency Management Oversight Committee on the
18 implementation of the Program and other provisions of this act on or before October 1, 2026, and
19 one year thereafter.

20 **SECTION 5.** Sections 1, 2, and 3 of this act become effective October 1, 2025. The
21 remainder of this act is effective when it becomes law.