Republic of the Philippines  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
Quezon City  

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS  
First Regular Session  
HOUSE BILL NO. 2469  

Introduced by REPRESENTATIVE JOEL MAYO Z. ALMARIO

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Philippines continues to experience disastrous fires. Each year, thousands of lives and billions worth of property are gutted by fire. To be precise, Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) records show that there is an average of 42 fire incidents a day resulting in roughly 850 fire-related injuries and over 250 fire-related deaths each year.

Despite this, the BFP is one of the most undermanned and underfunded government agencies. In fact, in a report released by the Commission on Audit (COA) last June 29, 2018, the BFP was flagged for insufficient manpower and shortage of fire trucks. COA auditors noted that there were only 23,030 firefighters which is less than half the ideal number of 50,490 firefighters or one fireman for every 2,000 people. Aside from insufficient manpower, only half of BFP personnel have basic protective gear including fire coats, trousers, helmets, gloves and boots. The bureau also lacks self-contained breathing apparatus devices that rescuers need to enter burning structures. It was also found that BFP falls short by about 30% of the standard of one fire truck for every 28,000 residents.

This bill seeks to assist the bureau in strengthening their ranks by adding to their personnel and ensuring that each field worker receives the necessary protective gear. The construction of fire stations and the provision of fire trucks, fire hoses, nozzles and breathing apparatus to enhance the BFP’s fire-fighting capability is also envisioned. Through the passage of this bill, it is hoped that our noble firefighters become fully equipped to protect all the Filipino people.

Support for this bill is earnestly sought.

JOEL MAYO Z. ALMARIO  
Representative  
2nd District, Davao Oriental
AN ACT
STRENGTHENING AND MODERNIZING THE BUREAU OF FIRE PROTECTION, PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

SECTION 1. This Act shall be known as the "Fire Protection Modernization Act of 2019."

SECTION 2. In addition to the existing functions under Republic Act No. 6975 otherwise known as the "Department of the Interior and Local Government Act of 1990" and Republic Act No. 9514 otherwise known as the "Revised Fire Code of the Philippines of 2008", the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) shall be have the following functions:

a) Be responsible for the prevention and suppression of all destructive fires in buildings, houses and other structures, including those found in economic zones including agro-industrial economic zones, free ports and special economic zones, IT parks/centers, manufacturing economic zones, medical tourism parks/centers, tourism economic zone, and other similar entities;

b) Establish and maintain regional arson laboratories and research and testing facilities with complete equipment;
c) Respond to disasters, whether manmade or natural, and respond to other emergencies, including rescue, medical emergencies, hazardous materials, chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosive materials, and other emergencies;

d) Conduct monthly fire prevention campaigns and information drive in all local government units, particularly in areas heavily populated by informal settlers in coordination with the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG); and

e) Require building owners to submit plans and specifications of the said building and other pertinent documents as may be determined by BFP and evaluate the same to ensure compliance with the Fire Code and other applicable codes and standards. For this purpose, a fire safety evaluation clearance shall be issued as a prerequisite for the issuance of the building permit.

SECTION 4. The Bureau of Fire Protection, in coordination with the DILG, shall establish and implement a Fire Protection Modernization Program which shall consist of the following components:

a) Fire Protection Service - The modernization program shall include the establishment of Fire Protection Service (FPS) in all local government units with no existing fire protection services, and the establishment of rescue hotlines in all local government units;

b) Forced Restructuring and Organizational Development. - The modernization program shall develop the BFP into a compact, efficient, responsive and modern with the capability to implement Republic Act No. 9514 otherwise known as the "Fire Code of the Philippines". The BFP, within ninety (90) days from the promulgation of the implementing rules and regulations (IRR) of this Act, shall recommend and submit to the Secretaries of DLLG and Department of Budget and Management the revised organizational structure and staffing pattern for officers and personnel of the BFP. The revised organizational structure shall include all the offices of the BFP, the Fire Training Service, and the BFP
Central and Regional Hospitals. The BFP shall likewise design and establish a qualifications upgrading program for the BFP officers and personnel in accordance with the Civil Service Commission rules and regulations;

c) Capability, Material, and Technology Development - The modernization program shall upgrade existing fire protection equipment and services and acquire of new equipment for fire protection: Provided, That the acquisition of new equipment shall be synchronized with the phase-out of uneconomical and obsolete major equipment and weapons systems in the BFP inventory;

d) Specialized Services Development - The modernization program shall establish specialized fire protection services within the BFP such as but not limited to; high-rise building fires, forest fires, aircraft/airport fires, ship fires, chemical fires, disaster rescue services, emergency medical services, and the like; and

e) Human Resource Development - The modernization program shall include trainings for BFP personnel and establish training facilities. Internationally accredited training consultants and foreign advisers may be contracted if experts of equal qualification cannot be secured locally to accelerate the personnel development program. All newly appointed uniformed personnel of the BFP shall undergo a Mandatory Training Program.

Within one hundred eighty (180) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Secretary of DILG and the head of the BFP shall submit the details of the Fire Protection Modernization Program to both Houses of Congress.

SECTION 5. The Secretary of Interior and Local Government may, subject to the approval of the President, under provisions of existing laws and regulations including those of the Commission on Audit and under such terms and conditions favorable to the government, enter into multi-year contracts or other contractual agreements with local or foreign suppliers/contractors in the implementation of this Act.

SECTION 6. The BFP shall submit to the Office of the President and to both Houses of Congress, through the Secretary of Interior and Local Government, an annual report
containing the process and status of the implementation of the Fire Protection Modernization Program.

SECTION 7. The Fire Protection Modernization Program under this Act, shall be implemented over a period of three (3) years effective upon the date of the approval of such: Provided, That payments for amortization of outstanding multi-year contract and obligations incurred under the modernization program may extend beyond this period.

SECTION 8. The amount necessary to implement the provisions of this Act shall be sourced from the BFP Modernization Trust Fund as provided for in Republic Act No. 9514. An additional amount of Five Billion Pesos (P5,000,000,000.00) is hereby appropriated to be included in the General Appropriations Act of the year immediately following the effectivity of this Act.

SECTION 9. Within thirty (30) days from the approval of this Act, the BFP and DILG shall promulgate the rules and regulations necessary to implement the provisions of this Act.

SECTION 10. Should any portion or provision of this Act be deemed unconstitutional, the remaining provisions shall not be nullified and shall be given full effect in its entirety.

SECTION 11. All laws, ordinances, rules, regulations, other issuances or parts thereof, which are inconsistent with this Act, are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 12. This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation, whichever comes sooner.

Approved.