

HB0079

~~{Omitted text}~~ shows text that was in HB0079 but was omitted in HB0079S01

inserted text shows text that was not in HB0079 but was inserted into HB0079S01

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1 Governmental Immunity Amendments

2026 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Matthew H. Gwynn

Senate Sponsor:

2 _____
 3 **LONG TITLE**

4 General Description:

5 This bill amends the Governmental Immunity Act of Utah.

6 Highlighted Provisions:

7 This bill:

- 1 ▶ defines terms;
- 2 ▶ provides that a governmental entity and the governmental entity's employees are immune from
suit for engaging in the following activities:
- 4 • responding to a disaster or potential disaster; or
- 5 • if the employee is a first responder, providing emergency medical services;
- 6 ▶ clarifies that immunity from suit for providing emergency medical services is not limited to
providing medical services resulting from emergencies of a certain type; and
- 8 ▶ makes technical and conforming changes.

6 Money Appropriated in this Bill:

7 None

18 Other Special Clauses:

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This bill provides a special effective date.

This bill provides retrospective operation.

Utah Code Sections Affected:

AMENDS:

63G-7-102 , as last amended by Laws of Utah 2025, First Special Session, Chapter 9

63G-7-201 , as last amended by Laws of Utah 2025, First Special Session, Chapter 15

63H-1-209 , as enacted by Laws of Utah 2023, Chapter 12

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:

Section 1. Section **63G-7-102** is amended to read:

63G-7-102. Definitions.

As used in this chapter:

(1) "Arises out of or in connection with, or results from," when used to describe the relationship between conduct or a condition and an injury, means that:

(a) there is some causal relationship between the conduct or condition and the injury;

(b) the causal relationship is more than any causal connection but less than proximate cause; and

(c) the causal relationship is sufficient to conclude that the injury originates with, flows from, or is incident to the conduct or condition.

(2) "Claim" means any asserted demand for or cause of action for money or damages, whether arising under the common law, under state constitutional provisions, or under state statutes, against a governmental entity or against an employee in the employee's personal capacity.

(3) "Emergency medical services" means the same as that term is defined in Section 53-2d-101.

~~[(3)]~~ (4)

(a) "Employee" includes:

(i) a governmental entity's officers, employees, servants, trustees, or commissioners;

(ii) a member of a governing body;

(iii) a member of a government entity board;

(iv) a member of a government entity commission;

(v) members of an advisory body, officers, and employees of a Children's Justice Center created in accordance with Section 67-5b-102;

(vi) a student holding a license issued by the State Board of Education;

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- 55 (vii) an educational aide;
- 56 (viii) a student engaged in an internship under Section 53H-3-1002 or 53G-7-902;
- 57 (ix) a volunteer, as defined in Section 67-20-2; and
- 58 (x) a tutor.
- 59 (b) "Employee" includes all of the positions identified in Subsection [~~(3)(a)~~] (4)(a), whether or not the
individual holding that position receives compensation.
- 61 (c) "Employee" does not include an independent contractor.
- 62 (5) "First responder" means the same as that term is defined in Section 34A-2-102.
- 63 [~~(4)~~] (6) "Governmental entity" means:
- 64 (a) the state and its political subdivisions; and
- 65 (b) a law enforcement agency, as defined in Section 53-1-102, that employs one or more law
enforcement officers, as defined in Section 53-13-103.
- 67 [~~(5)~~] (7)
- (a) "Governmental function" means each activity, undertaking, or operation of a governmental entity.
- 69 (b) "Governmental function" includes each activity, undertaking, or operation performed by a
department, agency, employee, agent, or officer of a governmental entity.
- 71 (c) "Governmental function" includes a governmental entity's failure to act.
- 72 [~~(6)~~] (8) "Injury" means death, injury to a person, damage to or loss of property, or any other injury that
a person may suffer to the person or estate, that would be actionable if inflicted by a private person
or the private person's agent.
- 75 [~~(7)~~] (9) "Personal injury" means an injury of any kind other than property damage.
- 76 [~~(8)~~] (10) "Political subdivision" means any county, city, town, school district, community reinvestment
agency, special improvement or taxing district, special district, special service district, an entity
created by an interlocal agreement adopted under Title 11, Chapter 13, Interlocal Cooperation Act,
or other governmental subdivision or public corporation.
- 81 [~~(9)~~] (11) "Property damage" means injury to, or loss of, any right, title, estate, or interest in real or
personal property.
- 83 [~~(10)~~] (12) "State" means the state of Utah, and includes each office, department, division, agency,
authority, commission, board, institution, hospital, college, university, Children's Justice Center, or
other instrumentality of the state.

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[(11)] (13) "Willful misconduct" means the intentional doing of a wrongful act, or the wrongful failure to act, without just cause or excuse, where the actor is aware that the actor's conduct will probably result in injury.

86 Section 2. Section **63G-7-201** is amended to read:

87 **63G-7-201. Immunity of governmental entities and employees from suit.**

91 (1) Except as otherwise provided in this chapter, each governmental entity and each employee of a governmental entity are immune from suit for any injury that results from the exercise of a governmental function.

94 (2) Notwithstanding the waiver of immunity provisions of Section 63G-7-301, a governmental entity, its officers, and its employees are immune from suit:

96 (a) as provided in Section 78B-4-517; and

97 (b) for any injury or damage resulting from the implementation of or the failure to implement measures to:

99 (i) control the causes of epidemic and communicable diseases and other conditions significantly affecting the public health or necessary to protect the public health as set out in Title 26A, Chapter 1, Local Health Departments;

102 (ii) investigate and control suspected bioterrorism and disease as set out in Sections 26B-7-316 through 26B-7-324;

104 (iii) respond to a national, state, or local emergency, a public health emergency as defined in Section 26B-7-301, or a declaration by the President of the United States or other federal official requesting public health related activities, including the use, provision, operation, and management of:

108 (A) an emergency shelter;

109 (B) housing;

110 (C) a staging place; or

111 (D) a medical facility; and

112 (iv) adopt methods or measures, in accordance with Section 26B-1-202, for health care providers, public health entities, and health care insurers to coordinate among themselves to verify the identity of the individuals they serve.

115 (3)

(a) A governmental entity, its officers, and its employees are immune from suit, and immunity is not waived, for any injury if the injury arises out of or in connection with, or results from:

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- 118 (i) a latent dangerous or latent defective condition of:
- 119 (A) any highway, road, street, alley, crosswalk, sidewalk, culvert, tunnel, bridge, or viaduct; or
- 121 (B) another structure located on any of the items listed in this Subsection (3)(a)(i); or
- 123 (ii) a latent dangerous or latent defective condition of any public building, structure, dam, reservoir,
or other public improvement.
- 125 (b)
- (i) As used in this Subsection (3)(b):
- 126 (A) "Contaminated land" means the same as that term is defined in Section 11-58-102.
- 128 (B) "Contamination" means the condition of land that results from the placement, disposal, or
release of hazardous matter on, in, or under the land, including any seeping or escaping of the
hazardous matter from the land.
- 131 (C) "Damage" means any property damage, personal injury, or other injury or any loss of any kind,
however denominated.
- 133 (D) "Environmentally compliant" means, as applicable, obtaining a certificate of completion from
the Department of Environmental Quality under Section 19-8-111 following participation
in a voluntary cleanup under Title 19, Chapter 8, Voluntary Cleanup Program, obtaining
an administrative letter from the Department of Environmental Quality for a discrete phase
of a voluntary cleanup that is conducted under a remedial action plan as defined in Section
11-58-605, or complying with the terms of an environmental covenant, as defined in Section
57-25-102, signed by an agency, as defined in Section 57-25-102, and duly recorded in the
office of the recorder of the county in which the contaminated land is located.
- 143 (E) "Government owner" means a governmental entity, including an independent entity, as defined
in Section 63E-1-102, that acquires an ownership interest in land that was contaminated land
before the governmental entity or independent entity acquired an ownership interest in the land.
- 147 (F) "Hazardous matter" means hazardous materials, as defined in Section 19-6-302, hazardous
substances, as defined in Section 19-6-302, or landfill material, as defined in Section 11-58-102.
- 150 (G) "Remediation" means the same as that term is defined in Section 11-58-102.
- 151 (ii)
- (A) A government owner and the government owner's officers and employees are immune from suit,
and immunity is not waived, for any claim for damage that arises out of or in connection with, or
results from, contamination of contaminated land.

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- 155 (B) A government owner's ownership of contaminated land may not be the basis of a claim against
the government owner for damage that arises out of or in connection with, or results from,
contamination of contaminated land.
- 158 (iii) Subsection (3)(b)(ii) does not limit or affect:
- 159 (A) the liability of a person that placed, disposed of, or released hazardous matter on, in, or under the
land; or
- 161 (B) a worker compensation claim of an employee of an entity that conducts work on or related to
contaminated land.
- 163 (iv) Immunity under Subsection (3)(b)(ii)(A) is not affected by a government owner's remediation of
contaminated land if the government owner is environmentally compliant.
- 166 (4) A governmental entity, its officers, and its employees are immune from suit, and immunity is not
waived, for any injury proximately caused by a negligent act or omission of an employee committed
within the scope of employment, if the injury arises out of or in connection with, or results from:
- 170 (a) the exercise or performance, or the failure to exercise or perform, a discretionary function, whether
or not the discretion is abused;
- 172 (b) except as provided in Subsections 63G-7-301(2)(j), (3), and (4), assault, battery, false imprisonment,
false arrest, malicious prosecution, intentional trespass, abuse of process, libel, slander, deceit,
interference with contract rights, infliction of mental anguish, or violation of civil rights;
- 176 (c) the issuance, denial, suspension, or revocation of, or the failure or refusal to issue, deny, suspend, or
revoke, any permit, license, certificate, approval, order, or similar authorization;
- 179 (d) a failure to make an inspection or making an inadequate or negligent inspection;
- 180 (e) the institution or prosecution of any judicial or administrative proceeding, even if malicious or
without probable cause;
- 182 (f) a misrepresentation by an employee whether or not the misrepresentation is negligent or intentional;
- 184 (g) a riot, unlawful assembly, public demonstration, mob violence, or civil disturbance;
- 185 (h) the collection or assessment of taxes;
- 186 (i) an activity of the Utah National Guard;
- 187 (j) the incarceration of a person in a state prison, county or city jail, or other place of legal confinement;
- 189 (k) a natural condition on publicly owned or controlled land;
- 190 (l) a condition existing in connection with an abandoned mine or mining operation;
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(m) an activity authorized by the School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration or the Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands;

(n) the operation or existence of a trail that is along a water facility, as defined in Section 73-1-8, stream, or river, regardless of ownership or operation of the water facility, stream, or river, if:

(i) the trail is designated under a general plan adopted by a municipality under Section 10-20-401 or by a county under Section 17-79-401;

(ii) the trail right-of-way or the right-of-way where the trail is located is open to public use as evidenced by a written agreement between:

(A) the owner or operator of the trail right-of-way or of the right-of-way where the trail is located; and

(B) the municipality or county where the trail is located; and

(iii) the written agreement:

(A) contains a plan for operation and maintenance of the trail; and

(B) provides that an owner or operator of the trail right-of-way or of the right-of-way where the trail is located has, at a minimum, the same level of immunity from suit as the governmental entity in connection with or resulting from the use of the trail;

(o) research or implementation of cloud management or seeding for the clearing of fog;

(p) the management of flood waters, earthquakes, or natural disasters;

(q) the construction, repair, or operation of flood or storm systems;

(r) the operation of an emergency vehicle, while being driven in accordance with the requirements of Section 41-6a-212;

(s) the activity of:

~~[(i) providing emergency medical assistance;]~~

~~[(ii)]~~ (i) fighting fire;

~~[(iii)]~~ (ii) regulating, mitigating, or handling hazardous materials or hazardous wastes;

~~[(iv)]~~ (iii) an emergency evacuation;

~~[(v)]~~ (iv) transporting or removing an injured person to a place where emergency medical assistance can be rendered or where the person can be transported by a licensed ambulance service; or

~~[(vi)]~~ (v) intervening during a dam emergency;

(t) responding to a disaster or potential disaster;

(u) a first responder providing emergency medical services;

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[~~(t)~~] (v) the exercise or performance, or the failure to exercise or perform, any function in accordance with Title 73, Chapter 10, Board of Water Resources - Division of Water Resources;

228 [~~(u)~~] (w) an unauthorized access to government records, data, or electronic information systems by any person or entity;

230 [~~(v)~~] (x) an activity of wildlife, as defined in Section 23A-1-101, that arises during the use of a public or private road;

232 [~~(w)~~] (y) a communication between employees of one or more law enforcement agencies related to the employment, disciplinary history, character, professional competence, or physical or mental health of a peace officer, or a former, current, or prospective employee of a law enforcement agency, including any communication made in accordance with Section 53-14-103; or

237 [~~(x)~~] (z) providing or failing to provide information under Section 53-27-102 or Subsection 41-1a-213(6), (7), or (8), 53-3-207(4), or 53-3-805(5).

239 (5) The following are immune from suit, and immunity is not waived for an action or failure to act within the scope of duties or employment, if the injury arises out of, in connection with, or results from the implementation of Section 17E-7-401 to the extent it addresses evaluating and classifying high risk wildland urban interface property, Section 31A-22-1310, or Title 65A, Chapter 8, Part 4, Wildland Urban Interface Property:

245 (a) the Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands;

246 (b) an officer, employee, or consultant of the Division of Forestry, Fire, and State Lands;

247 (c) a county;

248 (d) a wildland urban interface coordinator, as defined in Section 65A-8-401;

249 (e) the Insurance Department; or

250 (f) an officer, employee, or consultant of the Insurance Department.

248 Section 3. Section **63H-1-209** is amended to read:

249 **63H-1-209. Immunity from contaminated property claims.**

253 (1) As used in this section:

254 (a) "Agency" means the same as that term is defined in Section 57-25-102.

255 (b) "Claim" means an action, suit, claim, demand, allegation, or cause of action, whether grounded in law or equity, made in a court of competent jurisdiction, mediation, arbitration, before a regulatory body, or in another dispute resolution forum.

258 (c) "Contaminated property" means real property in a project area that is:

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- 259 (i) affected by historical contamination; and
260 (ii) owned by a governmental entity.
- 261 (d) "Environmental covenant" means the same as that term is defined in Section 57-25-102.
263 (e) "Governmental entity" means the same as that term is defined in Section 63G-7-102.
264 (f) "Hazardous materials" means the same as that term is defined in Section 19-6-302.
265 (g) "Hazardous substances" means the same as that term is defined in Section 19-6-302.
266 (h) "Historical contamination" means the placement, disposal, or release of hazardous materials or
hazardous substances onto, into, under, or in a way that affects real property, and which placement,
disposal, or release of hazardous materials or hazardous substances occurred prior to ownership of
the real property by a governmental entity.
- 271 (i) "Ownership," "own," "owned," "owns," or "acquires" means to have an ownership or other
established interest in real property, including holding title to, leasing, operating on, or maintaining
real property.
- 274 (2) In addition to the liability protection provided by Subsections 63G-7-201(4)(l) and [~~63G-7-201(4)(s)~~
(~~iii~~)] 63G-7-201(4)(s)(ii) and the other provisions of Title 63G, Chapter 7, Governmental Immunity
Act of Utah, the protections of Subsection (3) apply to a governmental entity that owns or approves
the use of contaminated property.
- 278 (3)
(a) Ownership of contaminated property by a governmental entity, or a governmental entity's approval
of the use of contaminated property does not subject a governmental entity, its agents, or its officers
or employees to any liability for or related to a claim arising from, proximately caused by, or related
to historical contamination.
- 282 (b) No governmental entity waives immunity from suit or liability by this section.
283 (c) A claim made against a governmental entity, its agents, or its officers or employees in violation of
this section shall subject the claimant to the payment of double the attorney fees and costs incurred
by the governmental entity related to the claim.
- 286 (d) This Subsection (3) does not limit or alter:
287 (i) claims against or the liability of the party that placed, disposed of, or released the hazardous
materials or hazardous substances onto, into, under, or in a way that affects contaminated property;
or
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(ii) a workers' compensation claim made by an employee of an entity that works on contaminated property or conducts work related to contaminated property.

(4) If a governmental entity that owns contaminated property develops the contaminated property for public or governmental purposes, including recreation, government offices, parking, or related uses, then Subsection (3) extends to that governmental entity, regardless of whether the governmental entity had a role in approving use of the contaminated property, if the governmental entity:

(a) obtains a certificate of completion from the Utah Department of Environmental Quality following participation in the voluntary cleanup program, as set forth in Section 19-8-111; or

(b) complies with the terms of an environmental covenant signed by an agency and properly recorded in the county records against the property.

Section 4. **Effective date.**

Effective Date.

This bill takes effect:

(1) except as provided in Subsection (2), May 6, 2026; or

(2) if approved by two-thirds of all members elected to each house:

(a) upon approval by the governor;

(b) without the governor's signature, the day following the constitutional time limit of Utah Constitution, Article VII, Section 8; or

(c) in the case of a veto, the date of veto override.

Section 5. **Retrospective Operation.**

Retrospective operation.

This bill has retrospective operation to {November 1, 2021} March 18, 1985.

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