

A bill for an act
relating to state government; creating a catastrophe survivor compensation
fund; appropriating money; amending Minnesota Statutes 2006, section 13.635,
by adding a subdivision; proposing coding for new law as Minnesota Statutes,
chapter 8A.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA:

ARTICLE 1
CATASTROPHE SURVIVOR COMPENSATION

Section 1. **[8A.01] PURPOSE.**

The purpose of this chapter is to create a structure to provide compensation
to survivors of catastrophes. This chapter applies when the legislature enacts a law
appropriating money for purposes of this chapter.

Sec. 2. **[8A.02] DEFINITIONS.**

Subdivision 1. **Application.** The definitions in this section apply to this chapter
unless the context indicates that a different meaning is intended.

Subd. 2. **Catastrophe.** "Catastrophe" means an extraordinary event that occurs in
Minnesota that causes widespread damage, injury, or death, in response to which the
legislature appropriates money to be administered under this chapter.

Subd. 3. **Economic loss.** "Economic loss" means pecuniary harm resulting from a
catastrophe, and includes loss of earnings, medical expenses, burial costs, property loss,
and loss of business or employment opportunity.

Subd. 4. **Fund.** "Fund" means the catastrophe survivor compensation fund created
in section 8A.06.

Subd. 5. **Loss.** "Loss" means economic and noneconomic loss resulting from a catastrophe, less compensation for that catastrophe already provided or to be provided by another source, as provided in section 8A.03, subdivision 5, paragraph (a). "Loss" does not include punitive damages. "Loss" does not include fees or costs, including but not limited to attorney fees and accounting fees, incurred for purposes of making a claim under this chapter.

Subd. 6. **Noneconomic loss.** "Noneconomic loss" means nonpecuniary harm resulting from a catastrophe, and includes loss for physical and emotional pain and suffering, inconvenience, physical impairment, mental anguish, disfigurement, loss of enjoyment of life, and loss of society and companionship.

Subd. 7. **State and its political subdivisions.** "State and its political subdivisions" means: (1) the state of Minnesota, an agency of the state of Minnesota, a statutory or home rule charter city, a county, a town, a school district, a metropolitan agency, a regional agency, or any other political subdivision of the state of Minnesota; and (2) any current or former officer or employee of an entity listed in clause (1) acting in official capacity.

Subd. 8. **Survivor.** "Survivor" means a natural person who suffers economic loss or noneconomic loss resulting from a catastrophe, and includes the personal representative of a natural person who suffers the loss.

Sec. 3. **[8A.03] COMPENSATION.**

Subdivision 1. **Administration; special master.** (a) If the legislature appropriates money for purposes of compensating survivors of a catastrophe, the executive council must appoint a special master to administer the fund for the survivors. The executive council may appoint the special master as an employee in the unclassified state civil service or may enter into a contract with the special master as an independent contractor.

(b) Except as provided otherwise, the special master is subject to laws governing executive branch agencies. The special master may hire employees, enter into contracts, adopt rules, and perform other acts necessary to administer the fund. If the special master hires employees, the employees are in the unclassified state civil service. Rules adopted by the special master are exempt from chapter 14, but section 14.386 applies to the rules. The special master and employees and contractors acting under direction of the special master are immune from liability for any act or omission within the scope of employment or contractual duties.

(c) The special master must report all administrative expenses incurred to the attorney general at a time and in a manner specified by the attorney general. Total expenses

incurred by the special master, other than payments made to survivors, must not exceed one percent of the amount the legislature appropriates for purposes of a specific catastrophe.

Subd. 2. Filing of claims. (a) A survivor may file a claim with the special master seeking compensation for loss suffered by the survivor. A survivor may not file more than one claim for a single catastrophe. In appropriating money to the fund, the legislature may establish an end date for filing a claim under this chapter.

(b) The special master must prescribe a claim form. The form must require a survivor to provide information sufficient for the special master to determine the amount of loss resulting from the catastrophe and the amount of compensation for the loss the survivor has received or may receive from another source.

Subd. 3. Determination of compensation. (a) Within 120 days of the filing of a claim, the special master shall determine the loss suffered by the survivor filing a claim. In determining the amount of loss, the special master must not consider negligence or any other theory of liability for the catastrophe.

(b) The special master may propose to compensate a survivor from the fund in an amount that does not exceed the loss suffered by the survivor. For each catastrophe, the special master may propose to compensate all survivors of that catastrophe for a uniform percentage of the loss suffered that is less than the full loss, or may take other steps the special master considers necessary to ensure that available funds can be equitably distributed among all survivors who have filed a claim.

(c) A determination of the special master under this subdivision is final and is not subject to judicial review.

Subd. 4. Payments. (a) Within 20 days of making a determination under subdivision 3, paragraph (b), with respect to a survivor, the special master shall notify the survivor of the amount the fund proposes to pay to the survivor. If a survivor decides to accept compensation from the fund, the survivor must do so within 30 days of receiving notice from the special master under this subdivision. Acceptance must be in writing, in a manner determined by the special master. A survivor who does not accept compensation from the fund within 30 days is considered to have rejected compensation from the fund. The decision to accept or reject compensation from the fund is irrevocable.

(b) A survivor who decides to accept compensation from the fund must execute a written release of all claims against the state and its political subdivisions for any legal claim or demand of any kind arising out of or relating to the catastrophe. The release must be in a form prescribed by the special master and shall provide that the survivor releases the state and its political subdivisions from any liability, including claims for damages arising from the catastrophe, and cooperate with the state and its political subdivisions

in pursuing claims the state and political subdivisions may have against any other party.
The release shall also provide that the survivor will indemnify the state and its political
subdivisions from any claims of contribution or indemnity or both made by others against
the state and its political subdivisions, and satisfy any judgment obtained by others against
the state and its political subdivisions, if such claims or judgment relate in any way to
the claim of the survivor rising from the catastrophe. The release does not apply to any
claim for damages or other relief from a person or entity other than the state or a political
subdivision of the state. A survivor who previously has filed an administrative, court, or
other action against the state or a political subdivision of the state seeking recovery from
loss resulting from a catastrophe must agree to withdraw the action before receiving
compensation from the fund.

Subd. 5. Payments from other sources. (a) In determining the loss suffered by a
survivor under this chapter, the special master must offset payments made or to be made
in the future from sources as defined in section 548.36, subdivision 1, that compensate a
survivor for loss or losses as a result of the catastrophe. In determining the loss suffered
by a survivor under this chapter, the special master must also offset any payments made or
to be made by a third-party tortfeasor pursuant to a settlement or other agreement with the
survivor, or a judgment in favor of the survivor, concerning any claim or claims of the
survivor which relate to, involve, or arise out of the catastrophe.

(b) Notwithstanding any statutory or common law or agreement to the contrary, a
person or entity required to make payments to a survivor may not eliminate or reduce those
payments as a result of compensation paid to the survivor under this chapter or as a result
of the survivor's release of claims against the state and its political subdivisions under this
chapter. No person or entity, having paid benefits or compensation to or on behalf of a
survivor, has any right of recovery, through subrogation or otherwise, against the fund or
with respect to any compensation paid by the fund. The obligation of any person or entity
other than the fund to make payments to a survivor is primary as compared to any payment
made or to be made by the fund. The persons and entities referenced in and covered by
this paragraph include, without limitation:

(1) reparation obligors, as defined in section 65B.43, subdivision 9, whether they are
insurers or self-insurers;

(2) health plan companies, as defined in section 62Q.01, subdivision 4, including the
Comprehensive Health Association created under section 62E.10;

(3) insurance companies, as defined in section 60A.02, subdivision 4;

(4) self-insured pools of political subdivisions organized under section 471.617 or
471.981, including service cooperatives pools organized under section 123A.21;

(5) risk retention groups, as defined in section 60E.02, subdivision 12;
(6) joint self-insurance plans governed by chapter 60F;
(7) workers' compensation insurers and private self-insurers, as defined in section 79.01;

(8) the Minnesota Life and Health Insurance Guaranty Association governed by chapter 61B;

(9) the Minnesota Insurance Guaranty Association governed by chapter 60C;

(10) the Minnesota Joint Underwriting Association governed by chapter 62I;

(11) all insurers providing credit life, credit accident and health, and credit involuntary unemployment insurance under chapter 62B, but also including those coverages written in connection with real estate mortgage loans and those provided to borrowers at no additional cost;

(12) the Minnesota unemployment insurance program provided under chapter 268;

(13) coverage offered by the state under medical assistance, general assistance medical care, and MinnesotaCare; and

(14) any other plan providing health, life, disability income, or long-term care coverage.

(c) Following an award to a victim by the special master, any entity claiming a subrogation interest against the award shall have 60 days in which to provide notice to the state and the victim of its intent to assert its interest, during which time the award shall remain in the possession of the state. Failure to provide notice shall result in a waiver of the subrogation claim. If no notice is received, the funds shall be released.

Subd. 6. State right of subrogation. Notwithstanding any statutory or common law to the contrary, the state is subrogated to all potential claims against third party tortfeasors of any survivor receiving compensation from the fund to the extent the claims relate to, involve, or arise out of the catastrophe. The state's subrogation right shall be limited to the amount paid to the survivor from the fund. The state shall be entitled to be reimbursed regardless of whether the survivor is fully compensated.

Subd. 7. Third party reimbursement of the state. Notwithstanding any statutory or common law to the contrary, the state shall be entitled to recover from any third party, including an agent, contractor, or vendor retained by the state, for payments made from the fund to the extent such third party caused the catastrophe.

Subd. 8. Attorney fee limit. An attorney representing a survivor with respect to a claim filed with the special master must not charge the survivor a fee.

Sec. 4. **[8A.04] DATA PRACTICES.**

The following data on individuals collected because a person files a claim for compensation under this chapter is public: name, amount of compensation paid under this chapter, and a release signed under section 8A.03, subdivision 4. All other data on individuals collected because a person files a claim under this section is private data on individuals as defined in section 13.02, subdivision 12.

Sec. 5. [8A.05] EFFECT ON STATE TORT LIABILITY.

(a) An offer to make a payment or any payment made under this chapter is not an admission in any way of liability of the state or a political subdivision of the state and is not admissible in any administrative or judicial action to establish this liability.

(b) The special master shall determine a survivor's loss and make payments to survivors under this chapter without reference to state tort liability limits in section 3.736, subdivision 4.

Sec. 6. [8A.06] FUND.

(a) The catastrophe survivor compensation fund is created as a fund in the state treasury. The fund consists of money appropriated to the fund by law, gift, and other revenue deposited in the fund.

(b) The special master may accept gifts, grants, and other donations for purposes of this chapter. These gifts, grants, and donations are accepted on behalf of the state and constitute donations to the state of Minnesota.

(c) Money in the fund is appropriated to the special master for the purposes of this chapter, including payments made to survivors and costs and expenses incurred in the administration of this chapter.

Sec. 7. Minnesota Statutes 2006, section 13.635, is amended by adding a subdivision to read:

Subd. 5. **Catastrophe survivor compensation fund.** Data collected for the purposes of administering the catastrophe survivor compensation fund are classified pursuant to section 8A.04.

Sec. 8. EFFECTIVE DATE.

This article is effective the day following final enactment.

ARTICLE 2

I-35W BRIDGE COLLAPSE SURVIVOR COMPENSATION

Section 1. **PURPOSE.**

The legislature finds and declares that the collapse of the I-35W bridge on August 1, 2007, constitutes a catastrophe under Minnesota Statutes, chapter 8A, and that the state should provide compensation to the survivors of the catastrophe.

Sec. 2. **PROCEDURES FOR I-35W CATASTROPHE.**

(a) The executive council must appoint a special master no later than 30 days after the effective date of this article to administer this article.

(b) Minnesota Statutes, chapter 8A, governs payments made with money appropriated in this article.

(c) For purposes of this appropriation, "survivor" has the meaning given in Minnesota Statutes, chapter 8A, but means only a survivor who was on the I-35W bridge when it collapsed or a survivor who is the personal representative of a person who was on the I-35W bridge when it collapsed.

(d) A survivor seeking compensation under this article must file a claim with the special master by 2008.

(e) Minnesota Statutes, section 8A.03, subdivision 5, does not prevent a survivor who has received emergency relief funding of up to \$10,000 based on lost wages due to physical injury or death from filing a claim for additional compensation from the catastrophe victim compensation fund. However, the amount of emergency relief payment received must be offset from the amount the survivor otherwise would receive from the fund.

Sec. 3. **APPROPRIATIONS.**

Subdivision 1. **Compensation to survivors.** \$..... is appropriated from the general fund for deposit in the catastrophe survivor compensation fund to provide compensation to survivors of the I-35W bridge collapse, and to pay administrative costs associated with determining and providing this compensation. No more than one percent of this appropriation may be spent for a purpose other than making payments to survivors. This appropriation is available until spent.

Subd. 2. **Grant.** \$750,000 is appropriated from the general fund for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2008, to the commissioner of administration for a grant to Waite House in Minneapolis to provide comprehensive services to youth and family of youth who

8.1 were on a school bus on the I-35W bridge when the bridge collapsed. This appropriation
8.2 is available until spent.

8.3 Sec. 4. **PAYMENTS PROHIBITED.**

8.4 After the effective date of this article, the commissioner of administration may
8.5 not accept new applications for payments to be made to provide emergency relief to
8.6 survivors of the I-35W bridge catastrophe based on lost wages due to physical injury or
8.7 death. The commissioner may process an application for payment if the application was
8.8 received before the effective date of this article.

8.9 Sec. 5. **EFFECTIVE DATE.**

8.10 This article is effective the day following final enactment.

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