

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5179

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON ECOLOGY & PARKS, FEBRUARY 8, 1993

Brief Description: Promoting vessel safety.

SPONSORS: Senators Owen, Barr, Fraser, Rinehart and Sutherland

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECOLOGY & PARKS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5179 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Fraser, Chairman; Barr, Deccio, McCaslin, Moore, Sutherland, and Talmadge.

Staff: Gary Wilburn (786-7453)

Hearing Dates: January 27, 1993; February 8, 1993

BACKGROUND:

Washington statutes provide safety requirements for the operation of vessels. These include the manner of operation, running lights, noise control, life preservers, accident reporting, life saving equipment, and other requirements.

However, there are no requirements in existing law that vessels having appliances or heating systems fueled by propane be equipped with devices to warn of propane leaks. Propane fuel in its gaseous state is heavier than air and a propane fuel leak in a vessel may lead to a buildup of flammable gases in the hold of the vessel. Such leaks have been the cause of vessel explosions on Washington waters, resulting in loss of life and property damage.

Monitoring devices to detect and warn of propane fuel leaks on vessels are widely available through marine suppliers.

SUMMARY:

Vessels required to be registered in the state that are equipped with propane-fueled heating or cooking systems shall be equipped with a device to warn of vapor leaks below the threshold danger of explosion. The device is to provide at least 12 hours continuous audible warning when connected to a fully charged twelve volt battery. Rules are to be adopted specifying the locations for the warning devices.

Vessels offered for sale or manufactured within the state on or after April 1, 1994 shall be equipped with such warning devices. Vessels shall not be modified in any way that causes a vessel to be out of compliance with the warning device requirements.

EFFECT OF PROPOSED SUBSTITUTE:

Legislative findings are added regarding the large number of recreational vessels in Washington State and the need for sensing and warning devices regarding liquid petroleum gas leaks. Effective July 1, 1994, recreational vessels required to be registered in the state must be equipped with such devices. The State Parks and Recreation Commission is to adopt rules defining vessels of open-air construction which are excluded from the requirements. The United States Coast Guard will be requested to adopt standards governing the installation of such devices. The commission will adopt rules to provide such standards if it determines the Coast Guard is not reasonably likely to adopt standards by April 1, 1994. The effective date of the requirement applicable to sellers or manufacturers of vessels is changed from April 1, 1994 to July 1, 1994. Penalties for violations are specified. An emergency clause and a severability provision are added.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: requested March 3, 1993

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

TESTIMONY FOR:

Will provide for increased public safety in the use of recreational vessels equipped with liquid petroleum gas-fueled appliances.

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED: Senator Owen, prime sponsor; Laurel Willis (pro); Nina Carter, State Parks and Recreation; Jack Swanberg, Northwest Marine Trade Association (pro)