
**Technology, Energy & Communications
Committee**

HB 2223

Brief Description: Regarding the effective date of RCW 19.122.130, from the underground utility damage prevention act.

Sponsors: Representatives Takko, Morris, Armstrong and Angel; by request of Utilities & Transportation Commission.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizes the Utilities and Transportation Commission to contract with a nonprofit entity to create a Safety Committee in advance of January 1, 2013, the effective date of the Underground Utilities Damage Prevention Act.
- Authorizes the Safety Committee to pass bylaws and establish organizational processes that are necessary to complete the Safety Committee's tasks.

Hearing Date: 1/13/12

Staff: Scott Richards (786-7156).

Background:

The Underground Utilities Damage Prevention Act

In 2011 legislation known as the Underground Utilities Damage Prevention Act (Act) was enacted. The Act made substantial changes to the statute governing safe excavation practices near underground facilities. A law governing safe excavation practices near underground facilities is often referred to as a "Dig Law," or a "Call Before You Dig Law."

Under the Act, all underground facility operators must subscribe to the one-number locator service, a service through which an excavator can notify utilities and request field-marking of underground facilities. An excavator must mark the excavation area with white paint and provide notice of excavation to the one-number locator service two to ten days before excavation

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begins. Underground utility operators must respond by marking underground facilities within two days of being notified of the planned excavation. Excavators may not proceed until all known facilities are marked or provided information regarding unlocatable underground facilities.

Safety Committee

Under the Act, the Utilities and Transportation Commission (Commission) is authorized to contract with a statewide, nonprofit entity to create a Safety Committee. The purpose of the Safety Committee is to: (1) advise the Commission and other state agencies, the Legislature, and local governments on best practices and training to prevent damage to underground utilities, and policies to enhance worker and public safety; and (2) review complaints alleging violations involving practices related to underground facilities.

The Safety Committee is made up of 13 members that serve staggered three-year terms. The Safety Committee must include members who represent a broad range of underground utility stakeholders and meet at least once every three months.

The Commission's authorization to contract with a nonprofit entity expires December 31, 2020.

Enforcement of Civil Penalties

The Commission may enforce civil penalties when it receives written notification from the Safety Committee indicating that a violation of the Act has likely been committed by a person subject to regulation by the Commission, or involving the underground facilities of such a person.

If the Commission receives written notification from the Safety Committee that a violation has likely been committed by a person who is not subject to regulation by the Commission, and in which the underground facility involved is also not subject to regulation by the Commission, the Commission may refer the matter to the Attorney General for enforcement of a civil penalty.

Civil penalties may not be more than \$1,000 per initial violation, and not be more than \$5,000 per subsequent violation within three years

Effective Date

The Underground Utilities Damage Prevention Act takes effect January 1, 2013.

Summary of Bill:

The Utilities and Transportation Commission is authorized to contract with a nonprofit entity to create a Safety Committee in advance of January 1, 2013, the effective date of the Underground Utilities Damage Prevention Act.

By January 1, 2013, the Safety Committee may pass bylaws and provide for those organizational processes that are necessary to complete the Safety Committee's tasks.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 6, 2012.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.