
Transportation Committee

HB 2255

Brief Description: Concerning ambulance seat belt notification, air bags, and driver training.

Sponsors: Representative Van De Wege.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Prohibits seat belt alarms from activating until the ambulance is put in drive gear.
- States any ambulance manufactured after the effective date of this act must have air bags that meet federal regulations in the cab of the ambulance and cannot be modified, blocked, or turned off.
- Directs the Washington Fire Chiefs and the Washington State Patrol to design a program that trains emergency personnel on driving ambulances using driver simulators with a report due to the Legislature by December 1, 2014.

Hearing Date: 1/20/14

Staff: Jerry Long (786-7306).

Background:

An ambulance is a vehicle used for emergency medical care that provides a driver's compartment; a patient compartment to accommodate an emergency medical services provider and one patient located on the primary cot so positioned that the primary patient can be given intensive life-support during transit; and equipment and supplies for emergency care. Ambulances have two primary weight categories with different designs, one category is rated 10,000 to 14,000 gross vehicle weight and the second category is 14,001 gross vehicle weight or more.

In the United States, standards for ambulance design have existed since 1976, where the recommended standards is published by the United States General Services Administration and known as KKK-1822-A. These recommended standard has been revised several times and is

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

currently in version "F", known as KKK-1822-F. The National Fire Protection Association has also published recommended design standards, NFPA 1917.

The Code of Federal Regulations Part 1, Federal Motor Safety Standard Number 208, requires that audible and visual seatbelt reminder systems be installed at the driver's seat position for passenger vehicles. Federal code requires a warning light for not less than 60 seconds and an audible warning of four to eight seconds for passenger vehicles when the vehicles ignition switch is moved to the "on" or the "start" position. Vehicle manufacturers are permitted to have reminder systems that go beyond the minimum standard.

Federal regulations require all light vehicles sold in the United States, which includes cars, SUVs, vans and pickup trucks, to have dual front airbags starting with the 1998 model year. In May 1995, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) issued a final rule for Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (FMVSS) No. 208, allowing manufacturers to install an on-off switch for the passenger air bag in vehicles that cannot accommodate a rear-facing child safety seat anywhere except in the front seat, like pickup trucks and cars either with no rear seat or with rear seats too small to accommodate rear facing child safety seats. In November 1997, NHTSA issued another final rule enabling owners of any vehicle to obtain, at their own expense, an aftermarket on-off switch for their passenger air bag if they transport people in certain high-risk groups.

Law enforcement agencies in Washington utilize driving simulators to train officers. Several states and local government have started using simulators to train emergency vehicle drivers in for example: New York, Michigan, Nevada, California, Connecticut, and Texas.

Summary of Bill:

Seat belt alarms are prohibited from activating until the ambulance is put in drive gear. Any ambulance manufactured after the effective date of the act must comply and current warning systems may be modified on any ambulance manufactured before the effective date of this act.

Any ambulance manufactured after the effective date of this act must have air bags that meet federal regulations in the cab of the ambulance and cannot be modified, blocked, or turned off.

The Washington Fire Chiefs and the Washington State Patrol are directed to design a program that trains emergency personnel on driving ambulances using driver simulators. A written report to the Legislature is due by December 1, 2014, which includes the design, administration requirements and funding options for the program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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