

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 2936

As Passed House:

February 8, 1996

Title: An act relating to fruit and vegetable storage.

Brief Description: Exempting food storage facilities from building code requirements relating to ammonia usage.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Commerce & Labor (originally sponsored by Representatives Clements, Chandler, Lisk, Foreman, Honeyford, Grant, Skinner and Mastin).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Commerce & Labor: 2/2/96 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 2/8/96, 98-0.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives McMorris, Chairman; Hargrove, Vice Chairman; Thompson, Vice Chairman; Romero, Ranking Minority Member; Conway, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Cairnes; Cody; Cole; Goldsmith; Horn and Lisk.

Staff: Chris Cordes (786-7117).

Background: The State Building Code Council has adopted by reference the 1994 version of the uniform mechanical code and the uniform fire code. With the adoption of these codes, the rules were revised relating to the use of ammonia for cold storage facilities. The rules requires an ammonia system to be equipped with an emergency discharge into a tank of water, meeting certain specifications, for ammonia absorption. Discharge to the atmosphere is allowed only through an approved flaring device that is designed to incinerate the entire discharge. Under the 1991 code, ammonia was allowed to be dispersed to the atmosphere through required safety relief valves that were designed to release enough pressure to prevent an explosion in an emergency situation.

Summary of Bill: The State Building Code Act is amended to provide that cold storage warehouses and controlled atmosphere storage warehouses used to store fruit or vegetables are not required to comply with sections of the uniform mechanical code or uniform fire code, as adopted by the State Building Code Council or amended by local jurisdictions, that require specified methods of ammonia dispersal.

The State Building Code Council is directed to adopt rules consistent with these limitations.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: The problems arising from the adoption of the 1994 codes create an emergency situation. The code requirements do not increase safety or add environmental protection. There are hundreds of cold atmosphere storage rooms with ammonia coolants. Millions of dollars could be at stake if the code requirements are enforced. These systems have been used for cold storage over 75 years and for cold atmosphere storage since the 1950s without problems. The only known injury incident would not have been prevented by the systems required under the 1994 code. Enforcing the code would result in a large increase in cost with no increase in safety.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Jim Clements, prime sponsor; Dan Sexton, Washington State Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters; and Dick Ducharme and Mark Triplett, Yakima Growers and Shippers.