

HOUSE BILL REPORT

2SSB 5568

As Reported By House Committee On:

Transportation

Title: An act relating to studded tires.

Brief Description: Limiting weight of tire studs.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senator Heavey).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 2/14/96, 2/21/96 [DPA].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 25 members: Representatives K. Schmidt, Chairman; Benton, Vice Chairman; Mitchell, Vice Chairman; Skinner, Vice Chairman; R. Fisher, Ranking Minority Member; Hatfield, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Backlund; Blanton; Buck; Cairnes; Chopp; Elliot; Hankins; Horn; Johnson; McMahan; Ogden; Patterson; Quall; Robertson; Romero; D. Schmidt; Scott; Sterk and Tokuda.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Brown.

Staff: Jeff Doyle (786-7322).

Background: The state of Washington permits the use of studded tires from November 1 to April 1 of each year. A 1991 study found that 24 states allow the use of studded tires during specified time periods; Illinois, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin prohibit studded tires.

Studies indicate that 14 to 35 percent of vehicles in Washington use typical studded tires. Typical studs have steel bodies and are heavier than the newer generation studs currently mandated in most of northern Europe. As the tire wears, the stud protrusion increases, exacerbating road wear. Furthermore, the rate of road wear increases when the pavement is wet.

Recent study data indicates that over the course of its 30,000-mile useful life, a studded tire will remove from one-half to three-quarters ton of asphalt concrete mix. The cost of material replacement alone would range from \$8 to \$15 per tire, depending on material costs. The state of Alaska has estimated that repairing ruts caused by studded tires requires that pavement adjacent to the rutted lane also be extracted, driving the repair costs up to \$40 to \$50 per studded tire.

In Sweden it has long been recognized that the conventional studs cause excessive pavement wear. A new low-noise, reduced-road-wear stud has been developed. It weighs only 0.7 grams, yet retains ice grip and durability. The reduction in weight is possible due to the use of a new polymer in the stud body.

In independent tests steel studs had a comparatively poor grip and were ranked second to last in overall performance when compared with lightweight studs.

The newest generation of lightweight studs is estimated to reduce road wear by 50 percent, without any decrease in performance.

Summary of Amended Bill: Lightweight studs, which are defined as studs at least 35 percent lighter than metal studs most commonly used in the industry, are the only type approved for use in studded snow tires beginning July 1, 2002.

Wholesalers must sell only lightweight studs to tire dealers in Washington beginning January 1, 1998. Tire dealers may continue to sell the heavier metal studs until July 1, 1999.

Amended Bill Compared to Second Substitute Bill: The implementation date is extended by one year to allow wholesalers and retailers sufficient time to prepare for the switch to lightweight studs.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed, except for section 4, relating to the use of studded tires, which takes effect July 1, 2002.

Testimony For: Studded tires cause at least \$8 million worth of damage to Washington's highway per biennium.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Senator Mike Heavey, prime sponsor; Richard Nordness, Washington State Tire Dealers' Association; David Dye, Department of Transportation; Bill Rostad, Northwest Tire Dealers' Association; and Bruno Wessel, B. Wessel, Inc.