

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 6725

As Passed Senate, February 12, 1996

Title: An act relating to exempting electrical switchgear and control apparatus from chapter 70.79 RCW.

Brief Description: Exempting electrical switchgear and control apparatus from chapter 70.79 RCW.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Energy, Telecommunications & Utilities: 1/30/96, 1/31/96 [DPS]. Passed Senate, 2/12/96, 49-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY, TELECOMMUNICATIONS & UTILITIES

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6725 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Sutherland, Chair; Loveland, Vice Chair; Finkbeiner, Hochstatter and Owen.

Staff: Phil Moeller (786-7445)

Background: The State Board of Boiler Rules is charged with overseeing the safe and proper construction, installation, repair, use and operation of boilers and similar unfired pressure vessels in the state. Several categories of this type of equipment are exempt from this regulation. These types of equipment include, among others, those used by railroads subject to the Interstate Commerce Act, lower-pressure vessels not located in public places, domestic water heating tanks, and small electric boilers with a working pressure under 80 pounds per square inch.

Several electric utilities in the state use a type of high-voltage circuit breakers that utilize sulfur hexafluoride gas under pressure. The gas is contained within pressured tanks at approximately 75 pounds per square inch. These tanks are generally located in restricted areas such as electric substations.

A 1993 ruling by the State Board of Boiler Rules requires increased inspection and certification requirements for these pressurized vessels utilizing sulfur hexafluoride gas.

Summary of Bill: The list of types of boilers and pressurized vessels exempt from regulation by the State Board of Boiler Rules is expanded to include electrical switchgear and control apparatus that have no external source of energy to maintain pressure located in restricted access areas under the control of an electric utility.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: These vessels are relatively new technology and pose little threat to the public. They are located in secure areas and inspecting these facilities would disrupt the electric system. Certification of these vessels would be very expensive.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Collins Sprague, The Washington Water Power Co. (pro); Mike Main, Mike Tracey, Puget Power (pro); Kristen Harte, Dennis Coerber, Snohomish County PUD (pro).