

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5539

As Passed Senate, March 12, 1997

Title: An act relating to accident reports.

Brief Description: Changing accident report requirements.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Transportation (originally sponsored by Senators Oke and Horn; by request of Washington State Patrol).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/6/97, 2/25/97 [DPS].
Passed Senate, 3/12/97, 48-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5539 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Prince, Chair; Benton, Vice Chair; Wood, Vice Chair; Haugen, Goings, Horn, Jacobsen, Morton, Oke, Patterson, Prentice and Rasmussen.

Staff: Jerry Long (786-7306)

Background: The driver of a vehicle that is in an accident where there is an injury or death or damages that are more than the minimum amount as established by the Washington State Patrol must file an accident report within 24 hours of the accident. It is up to the discretion of the driver to file an accident report in other circumstances. The report is filed with the law enforcement's jurisdiction in which the accident occurred. The original is sent to the Washington State Patrol. In addition to the report filed by the drivers, if a law enforcement officer is present at the scene or investigates the accident, the law enforcement officer will also file an accident report.

Summary of Bill: If a law enforcement officer completes an accident report, the drivers involved in an accident do not have to file a report. The reference to a driver's report has been deleted since not all accidents require an accident report to be filed. Time for filing an accident report is five days instead of 24 hours. Reference to his- within the statute is now the chief's- and instead of cause- of an accident on the report, the term has been changed to the circumstances- of the accident.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested February 3, 1997.

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

Testimony For: This gives the drivers involved in accidents additional time to file the accident report, especially if there are injuries or deaths involved. The filing of only one accident report either by the drivers involved in the accident or a law enforcement officer reduces the number of reports to be filed. In addition, the new process of filing only one report supports the CRASH Project started in the 1995-97 biennium with completion in the next biennium. The project will have the original accident report filed with the Washington State Patrol. The other agencies presently receiving the report will have electronic access to the reports instead of each agency receiving a copy and maintaining separate accident report files and computer systems.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Senator Oke, prime sponsor; Annette Sandberg, Chief, WSP; Linda Hendrickson, DOL.

House Amendment(s): The amendment allows four days instead of five days for a citizens accident report to be filed and adds an emergency clause to allow this change to be effective immediately. The emergency clause will allow the reduction in accident reports being sent to the Washington State Patrol to occur three months earlier.