

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESSB 5921

As Reported By House Committee On:
Economic Development, Housing & Trade

Title: An act relating to the disclosure of fire protection and building safety information.

Brief Description: Requiring the disclosure of fire protection and building safety information.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Judiciary (originally sponsored by Senator Kohl-Welles).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Economic Development, Housing & Trade: 2/22/00 [DP].

Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill

- Requires landlords to provide tenants with a written statement disclosing the fire protection and building safety information for the building.
- Exempts single-family residences from this requirement.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, HOUSING & TRADE

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Van Luven, Republican Co-Chair; Dunn, Republican Vice Chair; Eickmeyer, Democratic Vice Chair; Ballasiotes; Gombosky; Miloscia; Skinner; D. Sommers and Wolfe.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Morris.

Staff: Kenny Pittman (786-7392).

Background:

Under the state fire protection statutes, all dwelling units occupied by persons other than the owner, or built after 1980, must be equipped with smoke detection devices.

Installation of the device is the owner's responsibility, and the owner is also required to ensure that a device is operational after a vacancy. The tenant is responsible for maintaining the smoke detection device, including the replacement of batteries. Noncompliance by a landlord or a tenant is punishable by a fine of up to \$200.

Under the state Residential Landlord-Tenant Act, the landlord is required to maintain the premises in a manner fit for human habitation. Included in this is the duty to provide written notice: (1) that the unit has a smoke detection device; (2) that the tenant is responsible for maintaining the device in working condition; and (3) of the penalties for noncompliance.

Summary of Bill:

A landlord of a multi-family dwelling must provide a written statement to tenants that discloses fire protection and building safety information. The disclosure statement must include information on the fire protection features of the unit and the premises « such as sprinkler systems, smoke detection devices (including whether they are hard-wired or battery operated), other monitoring and detection systems, fire response plans, and evacuation practices to the extent they exist « and the smoking policy.

Both the landlord and the tenant must sign the statement and both parties must be provided with copies. The statement must be provided to new tenants prior to signing the initial lease, and to existing tenants no later than January 1, 2001. The requirement does not apply to single-family residences.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: The tenant's safety is the main concern. Having information on existing fire and building safety procedures and equipment will benefit both the tenant and the apartment owner.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Senator Kohl-Welles, prime sponsor; Chris Benis, Apartment Association of Seattle-King County; Doug Nyhart and Ken Opp, Washington Apartment Association.