

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6803

As of February 1, 2000

Title: An act relating to studying the feasibility of requiring automatic fire extinguishing sprinkler protection in existing congregate residences owned or operated by institutions of higher education.

Brief Description: Studying automatic fire extinguishing sprinklers.

Sponsors: Senators Kohl-Welles, Long, Brown, Goings, Eide, Patterson, Prentice, Finkbeiner and B. Sheldon.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Higher Education: 2/2/2000.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Staff: William Bridges (786-7424)

Background: Under the State Building Code, higher education dormitories are congregate residences.— Since 1989, new congregate residences three or more stories high or having an occupant load of 20 or more must have automatic sprinkler systems.

According to a recent article in USA Today, there are about 1,700 fires each year in U.S. college dormitories and fraternity or sorority houses. Since 1980, 17 persons have died in such fires, the most recent tragedy occurring at Seton Hall University, where three students died in a dormitory without automatic sprinklers.

Summary of Bill: The State Building Code Council must study the feasibility of adopting rules requiring all existing congregate residences owned or operated by any institution of higher education to be provided with automatic fire extinguishing sprinkler protection. The study must include a survey of all structures requiring retrofitting and the estimated cost per structure.

The State Building Code Council may form an advisory group of affected institutions and interested parties.

The State Building Code Council must report its findings to the Legislature by December 1, 2000.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.