

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6284

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Government Operations & Security, January 28, 2016

Title: An act relating to preventing water-sewer districts from prohibiting multipurpose fire sprinkler systems.

Brief Description: Preventing water-sewer districts from prohibiting multipurpose fire sprinkler systems.

Sponsors: Senators Takko and Roach.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Security: 1/26/16, 1/28/16 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & SECURITY

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6284 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Roach, Chair; Benton, Vice Chair; Pearson, Vice Chair; Habib, McCoy and Takko.

Staff: Alex Kearns (786-7416)

Background: Water-Sewer Districts (Districts). Districts are municipal corporations established to construct and maintain water and sewer systems for District residents. Districts may be formed by petition or resolution, and are governed by a board of three, five, or seven commissioners. Districts have the authority to regulate and control the use, distribution, and price of water within the District, and enforce collection charges against customers who connect with the system or receive water. Water meters are used to measure water usage at each property, and customers are charged based on this measure of water consumption.

Fire Protection Sprinkler Systems. A fire protection sprinkler system is an assembly of piping that starts at a connection to the primary water supply and carries water to sprinklers to contain and extinguish fires. There are two primary types of fire protection sprinkler systems used in residential homes; stand-alone sprinkler systems and multipurpose sprinkler systems. Stand-alone sprinkler systems are kept separate and independent from the water distribution system of the home, and the piping of the system serves only the fire sprinklers.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Multipurpose sprinkler systems combine fire sprinklers with the home's plumbing, so water is supplied both to regular plumbing fixtures and to fire sprinklers. Backflow prevention devices are used when sprinkler systems are connected to a nonpotable water supply, to prevent contamination between nonpotable and potable water.

The State of Washington does not require fire protection sprinkler systems to be installed in new single-family homes. However, individual municipalities may choose to adopt local ordinances specifying this requirement. Currently six cities in Washington have sprinkler ordinances. Fire protection sprinkler system standards are determined by the National Fire Protection Association, and have been adopted by the Washington State Building Code.

Summary of Bill: The bill as referred to committee not considered.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Substitute): A District may not prohibit the use of multipurpose fire sprinkler systems in single-family homes and townhomes. Water-sewer districts also may not require a separate water meter or backflow preventer for the multipurpose fire sprinkler system.

Multipurpose fire sprinkler systems are defined as systems that are constructed of approved potable water piping and attached sprinkler heads that are supplied only by the purveyor's water. They must terminate at a connection to a plumbing fixture to prevent stagnant water and may not have a fire department pumper connection.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on First Substitute Bill: PRO: Allowing water-sewer districts to require dual meters on residential fire sprinkler systems unnecessarily increases development and building costs. Meters have to be installed at a significant cost and must be inspected every year. This is a serious impediment to people who want to voluntarily install sprinkler systems in their homes. People with physical disabilities are significantly affected by fires, and fire sprinkler systems decrease the danger and intensity of fires when disabled individuals cannot evacuate. This bill would eliminate a significant barrier to expanding the use of fire sprinklers.

OTHER: The motivation behind having two water lines is public safety. If you only have one line and that line gets cut off then the sprinkler system gets cut off too. What water-sewer districts are doing now is leaving the fire line open in the event of nonpayment. Any system allowed under the law should have a flow through that doesn't allow for stagnant water, and there should be a sufficient backflow system to protect other people on that line. The added definition for "multipurpose fire sprinkler system" addresses these concerns. The liability exemption for water-sewer districts should be maintained.

Persons Testifying on First Substitute Bill: PRO: Senator Takko, Prime Sponsor; Amy Brackenbury, Washington Association of Building Officials; Tom Phillips, City of Kirkland; Toby Olson.

OTHER: Joe Daniels, Washington Association of Water-Sewer Districts; Steve Lindstrom, Sno-King Water Sewer District Coalition; Bill Clarke, Pierce County Water Cooperative.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No One.