

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1222

As Passed House:
March 2, 2015

Title: An act relating to firefighting apparatus length and weight limits.

Brief Description: Modifying certain firefighting apparatus length and weight limits.

Sponsors: Representatives McBride, Griffey, Clibborn, Orcutt, Van De Wege, Fey, Takko, Young, Sawyer and Bergquist.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Transportation: 1/29/15, 2/2/15 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/2/15, 97-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Increases the overall length of a firefighting apparatus from 50 feet to 65 feet before requiring a fire district or municipal department to obtain a permit to operate it.
- Provides a weight limit on single-drive axles of 31,000 pounds.
- Increases the weight limit per inch width of a tire from 600 pounds to 670 pounds.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 25 members: Representatives Clibborn, Chair; Farrell, Vice Chair; Fey, Vice Chair; Moscoso, Vice Chair; Orcutt, Ranking Minority Member; Hargrove, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Gregerson, Harmsworth, Hayes, Kochmar, McBride, Moeller, Morris, Ortiz-Self, Pike, Riccelli, Rodne, Sells, Shea, Takko, Tarleton, Wilson, Young and Zeiger.

Staff: Jerry Long (786-7306).

Background:

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.

"Firefighting apparatus" means a vehicle or combination of vehicles designed for fire suppression and rescue or for fire prevention activities. A firefighting apparatus must comply with all federal and state operating and safety criteria.

In 2001 House Bill 1095 was enacted, which established provisions allowing firefighting apparatus under 24,000 pounds on a single axle or 43,000 pounds on a tandem axle to operate without a Department of Transportation (DOT) permit. If a firefighting apparatus exceeded those weight limits, the bill provided for an issuance of an annual permit, but the apparatus had to be in operation prior to June 13, 2002. These larger apparatus are still exempt from the permit requirements in statute, but the operators of the exempt firefighting apparatus must obtain an annual permit from the DOT.

In 2002 Substitute House Bill 2673 was enacted, which established the maximum weight of an apparatus of 50,000 pounds on a tandem axle set and that it may not exceed 600 pounds per inch width of a tire. The weight limit must include the weight of: a full water tank, the equipment for operation, and the maximum number of personnel allowed on board the fire truck.

A firefighting apparatus must obtain an annual permit to operate if:

- the weight exceeds 600 pounds per inch width of a tire;
- there are 24,000 pounds or more on a single axle;
- there are 43,000 pounds or more on a tandem axle set;
- there are 67,000 pounds or more gross vehicle weight depending on axle spacing;
- the weight limit per inch width of a tire is over the manufacturer's tire load rating;
- there is a tridem axle set;
- the apparatus is wider than 8 feet and 6 inches;
- the apparatus is higher than 14 feet;
- the apparatus is longer than 50 feet over all;
- the apparatus has more than a 15-foot front overhang;
- the apparatus exceeds the length of the wheel base; or
- the apparatus weight is 50,000 pounds on the tandem axle set with a full water tank, equipment, and the normal number of personnel assigned to be on board, or it exceeds 600 pounds per inch width of a tire.

When applying for a permit, a current weight slip from a certified scale must be attached to the permit application form. Upon receiving an application for a permit, the DOT must transmit it to the local jurisdictions in which the firefighting apparatus will be operating, so that the local jurisdictions can make a determination on the need for local travel and route restrictions within the operating area. The DOT must issue a permit within 20 days of receiving a permit application and must issue the permit on an annual basis for the apparatus to operate on the state highway system along with any restrictions or limitations. A firefighting apparatus without the proper overweight permits is prohibited from being operated on city, county, or state roadways until a permit has been obtained.

The Washington State Patrol (WSP) is authorized to conduct random spot checks of firefighting apparatus to ensure compliance with overweight permit regulations. If a firefighting apparatus is found to be not in compliance, the WSP must issue a violation notice

to the fire department, prohibiting the operation of the firefighting apparatus upon the roadways.

It is a traffic infraction to operate a firefighting apparatus on the roadways after a violation notice has been issued. For a first offense, the penalty will be \$50; for a second offense, the penalty will be no less than \$75; and for a third or subsequent offense, the penalty will be no less than \$100. No individual liability will be attached to an employee or volunteer of the penalized fire department.

Summary of Bill:

The bill increases the overall length of a fire apparatus length from 50 feet to 65 feet before requiring a fire district or municipal department to obtain a permit to operate it, provides a weight limit on single drive axles of 31,000 pounds, and increases the weight limit per inch width of a tire from 600 pounds to 670 pounds.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Fire departments purchase the larger ladder trucks, but still must obtain an annual permit. It is difficult to obtain a fire truck and stay within the length and equipment needs. Most states do not have the weight limits the State of Washington has. The bill provides flexibility. The new vehicles and equipment are heavier due to having to have larger engine requirements and required firefighting equipment. Fire trucks cost approximately \$1.1 million. The stakeholders worked with the DOT in developing the new length and weight standards. With the standards, the trucks will cost less because they can use stock designs to comply with the existing standards. The DOT will review the truck's operational areas to ensure there is no damage to roadways or bridges. The City of Bellevue is in the process of replacing the next fire truck in its fleet. A fire truck lasts 15 to 20 years. Buildings have different designs and many are much higher than what buildings used to be, so ladder trucks are longer due to the equipment and length of ladders needed. This will give firefighters the tools they need to provide for additional safety of citizens.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative McBride, prime sponsor; Representative Griffey; Mike Remington, Washington Fire Chiefs Association and the City of Bellevue; and Todd Shepler, City of Bellevue.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.