

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6284

As Reported by House Committee On:
Local Government

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: Senate Committee on Government Operations & Security (originally sponsored by Senators Takko and Roach).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Local Government: 2/18/16, 2/24/16 [DP].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Prevents a water-sewer district from prohibiting the use of multipurpose fire sprinkler systems for single family homes or townhouses or requiring a separate water meter or backflow preventer for multipurpose fire sprinkler systems.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Appleton, Chair; Gregerson, Vice Chair; Taylor, Ranking Minority Member; Griffey, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Barkis, Fitzgibbon, McBride, Peterson and Pike.

Staff: Cassie Jones (786-7303).

Background:

Water-Sewer Districts.

Water-sewer districts (districts) may purchase, construct, maintain, and supply waterworks to furnish water to inhabitants within and outside of the district. Districts may also develop and operate systems of sewers and drainage, and are authorized to create facilities, systems, and

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programs for the collection, interception, treatment, disposal, and control of pollution from wastewater. Districts may also fix rates and charges for services, enter into contracts, levy taxes, and issue bonds and instruments evidencing indebtedness. Districts are governed by boards of elected commissioners.

Fire Protection Sprinkler Systems.

A "fire protection sprinkler system" is defined in statute as an assembly of underground and/or overhead piping or conduit beginning at the connection to the primary water supply that conveys water to dispersal openings or devices to extinguish, control, or contain fire and to provide protection from exposure to fire or other products of combustion.

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. 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.

Summary of Bill:

Water-sewer districts may not prohibit the use of multipurpose fire sprinkler systems for single family homes and town houses or require a separate water meter or backflow preventer for multipurpose fire sprinkler systems.

A "multipurpose fire sprinkler" is defined as a fire sprinkler system that: (1) is supplied only by the purveyor's water; (2) does not have a fire department pumper connection; (3) is constructed of approved potable water piping and materials to which sprinkler heads are attached; and (4) terminates at a connection to a toilet or other plumbing fixture to prevent stagnant water.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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) This is a simple bill that does not allow the water-sewer district (district) to mandate certain sprinkler systems. It will save people money because they will not have to obtain two meters. There is some information going around that some districts are charging

large extra fees for dual meters. Whether or not that has happened, there are other extra costs associated with having two meters.

The prohibition against multiuse sprinklers is not part of the building code. The law should be clear that they cannot be prohibited. The bill provides an incentive to the voluntary installation of fire sprinklers and is supported by fire chiefs and builders. It will save on additional costs to homeowners and developers.

(Opposed) None.

(Other) There have been some misrepresentations regarding the costs that districts charge for the separate water meters. In the Revised Code of Washington, there is a detailed description of what connection charges are allowed. Extra connection charges for a separate meter are illegal under the statute. There is one district that requires the separate connection lines. The purpose of doing this is not to make money but to protect public safety in the event of a water shutoff. If a house has a multipurpose system with a single line, and the water is shut off for nonpayment, the water is also shut off to the fire sprinklers. It is unclear how much money this bill will save people on meter charges.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Senator Takko, prime sponsor; and Amy Brackenbury, Washington Association of Building Officials.

(Other) Joe Daniels, Washington Association of Sewer and Water Districts.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.