

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 2503

As of February 25, 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: House Committee on Local Government (originally sponsored by Representatives Buys, Griffey, Springer and Van De Wege).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/16/16, 98-0.

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Security: 2/25/16.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & SECURITY

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. 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.

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.

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: 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: PRO: We have been looking at ways to reduce the cost of fire sprinkler systems so that people will install them in their homes voluntarily. One of the concerns is that if a person can't use a multiuse system they will have to use a more expensive fire suppression system and purchase a second water meter. That is something we want to prevent to keep costs lower.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Buys, Prime Sponsor.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: PRO: Amy Brackenbury, Washington Association of Building Officials.
OTHER: Joe Daniels, WA Assn of Water-Sewer Districts.