

**SENATE BILL REPORT**

**SSB 5179**

**AS PASSED SENATE, FEBRUARY 23, 1993**

**Brief Description:** Promoting vessel safety.

**SPONSORS:** Senate Committee on Ecology & Parks (originally sponsored by Senators Owen, Barr, Fraser, Rinehart and Sutherland)

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECOLOGY & PARKS**

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5179 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Fraser, Chairman; Barr, Deccio, McCaslin, Moore, Sutherland, and Talmadge.

**Staff:** Gary Wilburn (786-7453)

**Hearing Dates:** January 27, 1993; February 8, 1993

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS**

**BACKGROUND:**

Washington statutes provide safety requirements for the operation of vessels. These include the manner of operation, running lights, noise control, life preservers, accident reporting, life saving equipment, and other requirements.

However, there are no requirements in existing law that vessels having appliances or heating systems fueled by propane be equipped with devices to warn of propane leaks. Propane fuel in its gaseous state is heavier than air and a propane fuel leak in a vessel may lead to a buildup of flammable gases in the hold of the vessel. Such leaks have been the cause of vessel explosions on Washington waters, resulting in loss of life and property damage.

Monitoring devices to detect and warn of propane fuel leaks on vessels are widely available through marine suppliers.

**SUMMARY:**

Legislative findings are made regarding the large number of recreational vessels in Washington State and the need for sensing and warning devices regarding liquid petroleum gas leaks. Effective July 1, 1994, vessels required to be registered in the state with propane-fueled heating or cooking systems shall be equipped with a device to warn of vapor leaks below the threshold danger of explosion. The United States Coast Guard will be requested to adopt standards governing the installation of such devices. The commission will adopt rules to provide such standards if it determines the Coast Guard is not reasonably likely to adopt standards by April 1, 1994.

Vessels offered for sale or manufactured within the state on or after July 1, 1994 shall be equipped with such warning devices. Vessels shall not be modified in any way that causes a vessel to be out of compliance with the warning device requirements.

Penalties for violations are specified. Until September 1, 1994, only warning notices of violations shall be issued. If a court holds any provision of the state law to be preempted by federal law, the commission shall submit the state provision to the federal government for an exemption to the preemption pursuant to federal law.

A severability provision is included.

**Appropriation:** none

**Revenue:** none

**Fiscal Note:** requested February 2, 1993

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

**TESTIMONY FOR:**

Will provide for increased public safety in the use of recreational vessels equipped with liquid petroleum gas-fueled appliances.

**TESTIMONY AGAINST:** None

**TESTIFIED:** Senator Owen, prime sponsor; Laurel Willis (pro); Nina Carter, State Parks and Recreation; Jack Swanberg, Northwest Marine Trade Association (pro)

**HOUSE AMENDMENT(S):**

The House amendments make two technical changes that clarify: (1) the recreational vessels within Washington that are included; (2) language regarding violations.