

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5568

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Transportation, February 16, 1995

Title: An act relating to studded tires.

Brief Description: Limiting weight of tire studs.

Sponsors: Senator Heavey.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/7/95, 2/16/95 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5568 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Owen, Chair; Heavey, Vice Chair; Fairley, Haugen, Kohl, Morton, Oke, Prentice, Prince, Rasmussen, Schow and Wood.

Staff: Jeff Doyle (786-7322)

Background: The state of Washington permits the use of studded tires from November 1 to April 1 of each year. A 1991 study found that 24 states allow the use of studded tires during specified time periods, while Illinois, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin prohibit studded tires.

Studies indicate that 14 percent to 35 percent of vehicles in Washington use typical studded tires. Typical studs have a steel body and are heavier than the newer generation studs currently mandated in most of northern Europe. As the tire wears, the stud protrusion increases, exacerbating road wear. Furthermore, the rate of road wear increases when the pavement is wet.

Recent study data indicates that over the course of its 30,000 mile useful life, a studded tire will remove between one-half to three-quarter tons of asphalt concrete mix. The cost of material replacement alone would range from \$8 to \$15 per tire, depending on material costs. The state of Alaska has estimated that repairing ruts caused by studded tires requires that pavement adjacent to the rutted lane also be extracted, driving the repair costs up to \$40 to \$50 per studded tire.

In Sweden, it has been long recognized that the conventional studs cause excessive pavement wear. A new low-noise, reduced road wear stud has been developed. It weighs only 0.7 gram, yet retains ice grip and durability. The reduction in weight is possible due to the use of a new polymer in the stud body.

In independent tests, steel studs had a comparatively poor grip and were ranked second to last in overall performance, compared with light-weight studs.

The newest generation of lightweight studs are estimated to reduce road wear by 50 percent, without any decrease in performance.

Summary of Substitute Bill: Lightweight studs, which are defined as studs at least 35 percent lighter than metal studs most commonly used in the industry, are the only type approved for use in studded snow tires beginning July 1, 2001.

Wholesalers must sell only lightweight studs to tire dealers in Washington beginning January 1, 1996. Tire dealers may continue to sell the heavier metal studs until July 1, 1997.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: Requirements that lightweight studs be a specific weight (1.3 grams) are deleted in favor of a functional definition, requiring that studs be at least 35 percent lighter than existing technology studs.

Drivers may continue to use their snow tires with the heavier studs until July 1, 2001, instead of July 1, 1996 as mandated by the original bill.

Tire dealers are given until July 1, 1997 to sell their existing inventory of heavier studs.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: Studded tires cause at least \$8 million worth of damage to Washington's highways per biennium.

Testimony Against: The original bill is too proscriptive in mandating the studs be of a specific weight (1.3 grams). The same goal of reducing road wear can be accomplished with studs that are 35 percent lighter than the most common studs used in Washington.

Testified: Senator Heavey, prime sponsor; Dave Bowers, WSDOT (pro); Richard Nordness, Washington State Tire Dealers (con); Bruno Wessel, Bruno Wessel, Inc. (con).