

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5732

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As of February 16, 1995

**Title:** An act relating to incineration of medical waste.

**Brief Description:** Prohibiting incineration of medical waste, except anatomical waste, in residential areas.

**Sponsors:** Senators Fairley, Fraser, Kohl and Franklin.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Ecology & Parks: 2/15/95.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECOLOGY & PARKS

**Staff:** David Danner (786-7784)

**Background:** Washington hospitals dispose of medical waste in a variety of ways, including disinfecting it with microwave emissions before burying it in landfills, hauling it to area incinerators, and incinerating it on premises. Currently, some 15 hospitals in Washington incinerate their own medical waste on premises.

Hospital incinerators must comply with federal, state and local laws and regulations dealing with solid waste disposal, air quality, and workplace safety. Current regulations do not address emissions of certain contaminants, including dioxins produced by the burning of chlorine. The federal Environmental Protection Agency has classified dioxin as a probable human carcinogen which may have an effect on human fetal development and on the immune system. However, the amount of dioxin needed to lead to such effects is unclear.

The federal Clean Air Act, enacted in 1990, required the Environmental Protection Agency to issue rules governing medical waste incineration. In response, the EPA has proposed rules that would dramatically reduce allowable emissions of dioxins and other chemicals. Those rules are not final.

A handful of hospitals, including Northwest Hospital in Seattle, operate incinerators located in areas zoned as residential. Nearby residents have complained of the potential health risks associated with dioxins emitted from the incinerators, and have sought to prohibit the incineration of non-anatomical waste by the hospitals.

**Summary of Bill:** Incineration of medical waste, except anatomical waste, is prohibited in an area that is zoned residential by a city or county.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

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