
Transportation Committee

HB 1503

Brief Description: Inspecting unregistered tow trucks.

Sponsors: Representatives Simpson, Woods and Lovick.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires a person engaged in the recovery of disabled vehicles for monetary compensation or engaged in the business of towing vehicles for monetary compensation who is not a registered tow truck operator to have his or her vehicle pass an annual safety inspection.
- Requires a safety inspection upon initial application for and annual renewal of a transporter license.
- Raises the registration and annual renewal fee for a registered tow truck operators license from \$100 to \$125.
- Allows the Washington State Patrol to set the standards for safety inspections, insurance, and fees.

Hearing Date: 2/1/06

Staff: David Munnecke (786-7315).

Background:

Current statute regulates tow truck operators who impound vehicles from private or public property and/or tow for law enforcement agencies. Impounds, i.e., the taking and holding of a vehicle in legal custody without the consent of the owner, may only be performed by registered tow truck operators (RTTOs). If on public property, the impound is at the direction of a law enforcement officer; if the vehicle is on private property, the impound is at the direction of the property owner or his agent.

RTTOs are issued a tow truck permit by the Department of Licensing (DOL), following payment of a \$100 per company and \$50 per truck fee, plus an inspection by the Washington State Patrol (WSP). RTTOs must also file a surety bond of \$5,000 with DOL and meet certain minimum insurance requirements.

Tow trucks are also used by nonregistered operators that, for example, manage gas stations, repair shops and auto dealerships. These trucks are used to aid the underlying business and may not be used for impounding or responding to law enforcement calls. If these nonregistered operators use their tow trucks to recover disabled vehicles for monetary compensation, they must have insurance in the same manner and amount as an RTTO and submit to a safety inspection of his or her truck.

Those who engage in the business of delivering, by the driveaway or towaway methods, vehicles not owned by the transporter and of the type required to be registered for highway use are required to obtain a transporter license and plates.

Summary of Bill:

The Legislature finds that nonregistered tow truck drivers are required to maintain similar insurance to RTTOs and have their trucks inspected in a like manner, but that these requirements have not been met. The Legislature therefore also finds it necessary that an inspection system be established so that nonregistered tow truck drivers meet the minimum standards for safe equipment and insurance.

A person engaged in the recovery of disabled vehicles for monetary compensation or engaged in the business of towing vehicles for monetary compensation who is not a registered tow truck operator must have his or her vehicle pass an annual safety inspection by the Washington State Patrol (WSP).

An applicant for a transporter license must submit her or his vehicle to a safety inspection by the WSP prior to issuance of a transporter license and transporter plates. The holder of a transporter license must also submit her or his vehicle to a safety inspection prior to annual renewal of a transporter license.

The WSP is responsible for establishing by rule the safety and insurance standards for transporter vehicles, as well as the fee for the inspection prior to licensure or renewal.

The fee for original registration and annual renewal of a registered tow truck operator license is \$125.

Registered tow truck operators are specifically exempted from the requirement to obtain a transporter's license if engaged in the business of delivering vehicles by the driveway or towaway method.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 30, 2006.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.