

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 2576

As of February 27, 2014

Title: An act relating to establishing a mandatory occupational disease exposure reporting requirement for firefighters.

Brief Description: Establishing a mandatory occupational disease exposure reporting requirement for firefighters.

Sponsors: House Committee on Labor & Workforce Development (originally sponsored by Representatives Reykdal, Kirby and Pollet).

Brief History: Passed House: 2/12/14, 83-14.

Committee Activity: Commerce & Labor: 2/28/14.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR

Staff: Mac Nicholson (786-7445)

Background: Under the state's industrial insurance laws, workers who, in the course of employment, are injured or disabled from an occupational disease are entitled to benefits. Depending on the disability, workers are entitled to medical, temporary time-loss, and vocational rehabilitation benefits, as well as benefits for permanent disabilities. Occupational disease is defined in the industrial insurance statutes as a "disease or infection as arises naturally and proximately out of employment under the mandatory or elective adoption provisions of this title."

It is presumed to be an occupational disease when a firefighter contracts or develops a respiratory or infectious disease, cancer, or experiences any heart problems following exposure to smoke, fumes, toxic substances, or strenuous physical exertion due to firefighting activities. The presumption can be rebutted by evidence of tobacco use, physical fitness, weight, lifestyle, hereditary factors, and exposure from other activities. The presumption does not apply to heart or lung conditions developed by firefighters who are regular users of tobacco products.

Summary of Bill: The Department of Labor and Industries must convene a workgroup to discuss definitions, policies, and procedures for mandatory reporting of hazardous exposures suffered by firefighters in the course of employment.

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 workgroup includes representatives of firefighter unions, fire departments, fire chiefs, and self-insured employers. Recommendations are due December 31, 2014.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available. New fiscal note requested on February 27, 2014.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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