

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESSB 5552

*As Reported By House Committee on:
Environmental Affairs*

Title: An act relating to water systems operator certification and registration.

Brief Description: Requiring certification of water systems operators.

Sponsor(s): Senate Committee on Energy & Utilities (originally sponsored by Senators Barr, Madsen and Williams; by request of Department of Health).

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Environmental Affairs, April 2, 1991, DPA.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS**

Majority Report: *Do pass as amended.* Signed by 13 members: Representatives Rust, Chair; Valle, Vice Chair; Horn, Ranking Minority Member; Edmondson, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bray; Brekke; G. Fisher; Neher; Phillips; Pruitt; D. Sommers; Sprenkle; and Van Luven.

Staff: Harry Reinert (786-7110).

Background: Washington State law defines a public water system as any water system having two or more connections. There are over 12,500 public water systems in the state. Over 11,500 of these systems have fewer than 100 connections.

Congress amended the federal Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) in 1986. The Department of Health has been designated by the Environmental Protection Agency to enforce the SDWA in Washington State. The SDWA increases the number of contaminants that must be tested for and imposes additional monitoring and treatment requirements on public water systems.

The SDWA defines a public water system as any system which has at least 15 service connections or which regularly serves at least 25 individuals.

Washington law currently requires a public water system to have a certified operator if it has at least 100 connections or if it uses a surface water supply that must be filtered and serves at least 25 individuals.

A certified operator whose certificate is revoked for failure to comply with rules or for negligence may not reapply for a license for six months. The Department of Health is directed to categorize water systems based on the water conditions and the size of the system in order to determine the experience needed for certified operators.

Summary of Amended Bill: A public water system must have a certified operator if it has at least 100 connections, regardless of the water source, or if it has 15 connections or an average of 25 individuals and it uses surface water or ground water under the influence of surface water.

The definition of a "public water system" is modified to make it consistent with the definition in the state Safe Drinking Water Act. Public water systems with four or fewer connections on a farm are excluded from the definition.

The length of time before a certified operator whose certificate is revoked can apply for a new certificate is extended from six months to one year.

The classification of water systems by the Department of Health shall, in addition to assisting in determining operator qualifications, be used to assure the protection of the state's water resources. The department shall consider economic impacts and public health risks when making the determinations.

Amended Bill Compared to Engrossed Substitute Bill: The amendment clarifies a provision of the bill providing that water systems that serve 15 or fewer single-family households are not required to have a certified operator.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: The new federal standards for drinking water quality will require the capability of trained individuals to be responsible for drinking water systems covered by the federal law.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Senator Ken Madsen (pro); and Dave Clark,
Department of Health (pro).