

SENATE BILL REPORT

2SHB 1524

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Labor & Commerce, March 21, 2025

Title: An act relating to ensuring compliance with and enforcement of certain workplace standards and requirements applicable to employers of isolated employees.

Brief Description: Concerning workplace standards and requirements applicable to employers of isolated employees.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Obras, Scott, Fosse, Hill, Gregerson, Reed, Berry, Parshley, Salahuddin, Peterson, Simmons, Ormsby, Macri and Pollet).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/5/25, 86-10.

Committee Activity: Labor & Commerce: 3/17/25, 3/21/25 [DP, DNP, w/oRec].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Adds enforcement provisions to existing statutes related to isolated employees and authorizes the Department of Labor and Industries to investigate violations and assess penalties for willful violations.
- Modifies definitions and terminology in the existing statutes related to isolated employees.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR & COMMERCE

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Saldaña, Chair; Conway, Vice Chair; King, Ranking Member; Alvarado, Ramos and Stanford.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators MacEwen and Schoesler.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senator Braun.

Staff: Jarrett Sacks (786-7448)

Background: State law requires every hotel, motel, retail or security guard entity, or property service contractor, who employs an employee to:

- adopt a sexual harassment policy;
- provide mandatory training to managers, supervisors, and employees to prevent sexual harassment and sexual discrimination, and to inform the employer's workforce on legal protections for employees;
- provide a list of resources for employees to utilize; and
- provide a panic button to each employee.

An employee is an individual who spends a majority of their working hours alone, or whose primary work responsibility involves working without another coworker present, and who is employed by an employer as a janitor, security guard, hotel or motel housekeeper, or room service attendant.

A panic button is an emergency contact device carried by an employee by which the employee may summon immediate on-scene assistance from another worker, a security guard, or a representative of the employer.

A property service contractor must submit the following to the Department of Labor and Industries (L&I):

- the date of adoption of the required sexual harassment policy;
- the number of managers, supervisors, and employees trained; and
- the physical address of the work location or locations at which janitorial services are provided by workers of the property services contractor and specified information about each location.

L&I is required to make aggregate data from the information received from property service contractors available upon request.

A property service contractor is any person or entity that employs workers:

- to perform labor for another person to provide commercial janitorial services; or
- on behalf of an employer to provide commercial janitorial services.

A property service contractor is not the Employment Security Department or individuals who perform labor under an agreement for exchanging their own labor or services with each other, if the work is performed on land owned or leased by the individuals.

Summary of Bill: Definitions and Terminology. The term "employee" is changed to "isolated employee," and the definition is modified to mean a janitor, security guard, hotel

or motel housekeeper, or room service attendant who performs work in an area where two or more coworkers, supervisors, or a combination thereof are unable to immediately respond to an emergency without being summoned by the employee, or who spends at least 50 percent of her or his working hours without a supervisor or another coworker present.

Additional requirements are added to the definition of panic button. A panic button must:

- be designed to be carried by the isolated employee;
- be simple to activate without delays caused by entering passwords or waiting for the system to turn on;
- provide an effective signal for the circumstances when activated; and
- be able to summon immediate assistance and allow responders to accurately identify the isolated employee's location.

Training, Recordkeeping, and Enforcement. The required training for isolated employees must include information on how to use panic buttons and inform supervisors on the responsibility to respond to the use of panic buttons. Employers are required to document completion of the mandatory training and maintain a record of the purchase and utilization of panic buttons provided to isolated employees. Both the documentation and the records must be provided to L&I upon request. It is specified that the information property service contractors are required to send L&I must be sent annually.

Enforcement. Penalties are added to the isolated employee statute. L&I must investigate if a complaint is filed or if L&I has reason to believe that an employer has committed a violation. Except when a violation is otherwise resolved, L&I must either issue a citation assessing a civil penalty or a closure letter. The civil penalty for the first willful violation is \$1,000. For repeat willful violations, there is a civil penalty of at least \$2,000 but not more than \$10,000. L&I may waive or reduce a civil penalty if it determines that the employer has taken corrective action to resolve the violation.

Appropriation: The bill contains a null and void clause requiring specific funding be provided in an omnibus appropriation act.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on January 1, 2026.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The bill ensures the safety and well-being of isolated employees. There is already legislation for isolated workers, but it did not provide for any enforcement mechanism. The bill sets a clear standard for employers to make work safer. Too many employers have neglected the current law because there is no enforcement. The bill protects workers who are the most vulnerable.

OTHER: The Legislature should pass this bill as it currently is without any changes.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Edwin Obras, Prime Sponsor; Khalil Hamiduddin, SEIU6.

OTHER: Julia Gorton, Washington Hospitality Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.