
SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5450

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2025 Regular Session

By Senate Environment, Energy & Technology (originally sponsored by Senators Slatter, Hasegawa, Nobles, Saldaña, Shewmake, C. Wilson, and J. Wilson)

READ FIRST TIME 02/19/25.

1 AN ACT Relating to increasing transparency regarding sewage-
2 containing spills; adding new sections to chapter 90.48 RCW; and
3 creating a new section.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that municipal
6 wastewater treatment plant owners/operators and wastewater collectors
7 with national pollutant discharge elimination system permits are
8 required by their water quality permits to disclose unauthorized
9 spills or discharges containing untreated or undertreated sewage to
10 the department of ecology, but that such notices of sewage spills are
11 not expeditiously or easily made publicly available. Those who count
12 on clean water quality for their jobs in fishing or aquaculture, to
13 enjoy their recreational interests, or to pursue their cultural
14 traditions are likely to be especially impacted by sewage spills, and
15 would particularly benefit from a system of timely public notice in
16 the event of a spill. A number of other states have established
17 systems in which public notification of a spill is available in
18 nearly real time posted by a water quality regulator, and in which
19 alerts can be issued to those interested in the event of a spill in a
20 particular geographic area. Therefore, it is the intent of the

1 legislature to improve the public's ability to know about sewage
2 spills that may impact them by establishing such a system.

3 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 90.48
4 RCW to read as follows:

5 The definitions in this section apply to sections 3 through 5 of
6 this act unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

7 (1) "Combined sewer" means a sewer that has been designed to
8 serve as a sanitary sewer and a storm sewer, and into which inflow is
9 allowed by local ordinance.

10 (2) "Sewage spill" means the intentional or accidental discharge
11 of untreated or undertreated wastewater that does not meet permit
12 requirements, from any portion of a sewage treatment plant or
13 collection system, including a combined sewer, in this state.

14 (3) "Sewage treatment plant or collection system" means any
15 sewage treatment plant, water pollution control facility, related
16 pumping system, collection system, or other public sewage works.

17 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 90.48
18 RCW to read as follows:

19 (1) By July 1, 2026, the department must develop and publish a
20 public-facing website that includes, but is not limited to, notices
21 of the locations where sewage spills occur that are reported to the
22 department under individual water quality permits for discharges that
23 contain sewage. The department must post on the website notice of the
24 reported sewage spill. The notice on the department's website must
25 include the following information, as reported to the department:

26 (a) The estimated volume or rate of discharge and, once known,
27 the final volume discharged;

28 (b) The level of treatment of the discharge;

29 (c) The date and time the incident initiated;

30 (d) The location of the discharge;

31 (e) Once known, the estimated or actual time the discharge
32 ceased;

33 (f) The geographic area potentially impacted by the discharge;
34 and

35 (g) Once known, the steps taken to contain the discharge.

36 (2) Within a reasonable amount of time following the conclusion
37 of a reported sewage spill under this section, the department must
38 update the website to reflect the total estimated volume of

1 discharges, dates, times, and duration of the spill, waters impacted
2 by the spill, and other final spill information reported to the
3 department.

4 (3) The department must design the website in a way that
5 effectively communicates with people who have limited English
6 proficiency.

7 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** A new section is added to chapter 90.48
8 RCW to read as follows:

9 (1) By July 1, 2027, the department must implement a public
10 notification system, through which the public may choose to be
11 notified of basic information regarding untreated or undertreated
12 sewage spills. Notifications by the department under this section
13 must occur no later than four hours, within regular working business
14 hours, after the receipt by the department of a notice of a sewage
15 spill. Notifications must reflect or link to the information made
16 available by the department under section 3 of this act.

17 (2) For purposes of this section, "regular working business
18 hours" constitute the hours between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday
19 through Friday, excluding state legal holidays.

20 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** A new section is added to chapter 90.48
21 RCW to read as follows:

22 (1) By March 15, 2026, the department must publish a list of
23 sewage spills reported to the department during the preceding
24 calendar year.

25 (2) By March 15, 2027, and each March 15th thereafter, the
26 department must publish and make publicly available on the website an
27 annual report of sewage spills that occurred during the preceding
28 calendar year that were reported to the department. The annual report
29 must include the waters impacted, duration, volume, and any action
30 taken by the department related to such sewage spills.

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