

SENATE BILL REPORT

EHB 3003

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Commerce & Labor, February 26, 1998

Title: An act relating to exempting computer wires and fiber optic cables from electrical wiring requirements.

Brief Description: Exempting computer wires and fiber optic cables from electrical wiring requirements.

Sponsors: Representatives Honeyford, Crouse, Mielke, Wensman, Benson, Clements, Schoesler and Bush.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Commerce & Labor: 2/23/98, 2/26/98 [DPA, DNPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Schow, Chair; Horn, Vice Chair; Anderson and Newhouse.

Minority Report: Do not pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Franklin, Fraser and Heavey.

Staff: Genevieve Pisarski (786-7488)

Background: All wires and equipment that use, conduct, or operate on electrical current must conform to the state's electrical code. Certain types of wires and equipment, which are low voltage, are exempt.

Summary of Amended Bill: Fiber optic cables are exempt from the electrical code. Repair, installation, or maintenance of structured communication cabling is exempted from electrical contractor licensing and electricians' certification requirements but is subject to installation standards and inspections. Structured communication cabling does not include fire and security alarm systems, patient monitoring systems, and energy management control systems.

An advisory committee representing groups and entities affected must study regulation of telecommunications infrastructure and recommend alternatives to the Legislature by January 1, 1999.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill: An advisory committee to study regulation of telecommunications infrastructure and recommend alternatives is added.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: Problems have not been related to whether installation was licensed and certified. Costs are lower without these, and inspection and safety requirements remain. Utilities install very large quantities of fiber optic cable and don't need regulations; installers are electricians. They are trained and experienced. The license required for high voltage is not needed. The same structured cable is used for phone as for computer, but is now treated differently. There is no electrical work in the installation.

Testimony Against: This exempts anyone, not just trained and experienced utility employees. The list of systems that "structured communication cabling" does not include is not complete. There are also traffic systems, connections to police and fire departments, manufacturing processes, home security systems, and surveillance systems in prisons. Safety issues remain because wires are combined. Maintenance of some fiber optic cable has a risk of injury from infrared light. The stakeholders should be brought together to address this issue. The many types of wiring now in use need to be installed by competent individuals and need to be grouped for purposes of certification

Testified: PRO: Mike Williams, Craig Paterson, GTE; CON: Richard King, IBEW 46; Bill Bouler; David Johnson, IBEW 76; Michael Zenk, IBEW 76; Richard Nelson, IBEW 46; Geoff Newmna, Evergreen Technologies.