

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESHB 2519

*As Passed House
February 18, 1992*

Title: An act relating to fire protection.

Brief Description: Enacting the rural homeowners fire protection act.

Sponsor(s): By House Committee on Natural Resources & Parks (originally sponsored by Representatives Dellwo, Wynne, Fraser, D. Sommers and Paris; by request of Department of Natural Resources).

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Natural Resources & Parks, February 7, 1992, DPS;
Passed House, February 18, 1992, 84-14.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
NATURAL RESOURCES & PARKS**

Majority Report: *The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass.* Signed by 7 members: Representatives Belcher, Chair; Scott, Vice Chair; Dellwo; Fraser; Hargrove; Riley; and Sheldon.

Minority Report: *Do not pass.* Signed by 4 members: Representatives Beck, Ranking Minority Member; Brumsickle, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Morton; and Wynne.

Staff: John Conniff (786-7119).

Background: The wildfire that destroyed many homes in the Spokane area last year demonstrated the danger to life and property by the development of residential housing on land abutting or within a forest or wildland. Often such residential housing developments have been designed and constructed without sufficient attention to the risk of fire and the need for fire protection services.

Summary of Bill: By July 1, 1993, and in cooperation with public fire agencies, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) must develop a system for rating the wildfire risk in developed and potential development areas and must prepare maps displaying these high or extreme fire hazard areas.

By January 1, 1994, each county must adopt an ordinance or resolution addressing fire protection standards for high or extreme hazard areas designated by DNR. The ordinance or resolution must include standards for fire resistant building construction, for water systems, for management of flammable growth, and for fire protection service access to developed areas.

By July 1, 1993, the state Building Code Council must adopt guidelines to assist counties in the adoption of an ordinance or resolution required for fire protection in high or extreme fire hazard areas.

Fiscal Note: Available. New fiscal note requested February 8, 1992.

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

Testimony For: (Original bill): As residential developments spread out away from urban areas into wildland areas, the risk of a wildfire destroying homes and injuring residents grows. Many of these new developments have not made adequate provision for fire fighting. Insufficient water supplies and inadequate roadways limit the ability for fire fighters to respond to wildfires that threaten these developments. In addition, public utilities need to better control the growth of vegetation along utility transmission lines in high and extreme fire hazard areas. Requiring counties and utilities to address fire protection issues will reduce the probability that a future wildfire will destroy homes and injure residents living in high and extreme fire hazard areas. However, some changes to the legislation are necessary.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: (Original bill): Stan Biles, Department of Natural Resources (in favor); Otto Jensen, State Fire Chiefs (in favor); Ed Lewis, Spokane County Fire Department (in favor); Bob Gear, Benton County Fire District #1 (in favor); Mike Harrison, Deputy Fire Chief of Chehalis (in favor); Terry Oxley, Puget Power Light Company (in favor); Ken McAllister, Committee on Firesafe Roofing (in favor); Dick Welsh, property rights advocate (in favor); and Bill Vogler, Association of Counties (in favor).