

# FINAL BILL REPORT

## 2SHB 1289

---

C 36 L 96

Synopsis as Enacted

**Brief Description:** Specifying the duties of an operator of a vessel involved in an accident.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Law & Justice (originally sponsored by Representatives Ballasiotes, Costa, Sheahan, Van Luven, Lambert, Mason, Mielke, Reams, Delvin, Foreman and Scott).

**House Committee on Law & Justice**  
**Senate Committee on Law & Justice**

**Background:** Certain regulations apply to the operation of vessels on Washington waters. "Vessels" include all watercraft, other than seaplanes, used for transportation on the water. The term "vessel" does not include inner tubes, air mattresses, and small rafts or flotation devices, or toys customarily used by swimmers.

The operator of a vessel involved in an accident must render all practical and necessary assistance to anyone affected by the accident to save him or her from danger. The operator is relieved of that obligation if the operator's own vessel or passengers would be placed in serious danger. The operator must also provide all pertinent accident information to the law enforcement agency having jurisdiction.

A violation of the requirement to stop and assist is a civil infraction unless the operator commits three violations within one year, in which case a violation is a misdemeanor. The civil infraction penalty is \$110. A comparable federal law imposes criminal liability on an operator of a vessel who fails to stop and render assistance and provide identification.

There are no additional penalties if a vessel operator involved in an accident leaves the scene of the accident. In contrast, if a person leaves the scene of a car accident, the person is subject to various penalties depending upon whether the accident resulted in property damage or injury or death to another person involved in the accident. If a person leaves the scene of a car accident which has resulted in injury or death to another person, the person is guilty of a class C felony. That crime is ranked at seriousness level IV on the Sentencing Reform Act grid. The standard range for a first-time offender convicted of a level IV offense is 3 to 9 months. First-time offenders are eligible for the first-time offender waiver, which carries a possible jail sentence of 0 to 90 days, other conditions, and supervision.

**Summary:** An operator of a vessel is guilty of a class C felony if the operator is involved in a collision that results in injury to a person, the operator knew or should have known that a person was injured, and the operator leaves the scene of the collision without rendering all practical and necessary assistance to the injured person as required under current law. The bill does not apply to vessels involved in commerce, such as tugs, barges, cargo, commercial passenger, fishing, and processing vessels.

A violation is ranked at seriousness level IV on the Sentencing Reform Act grid.

**Votes on Final Passage:**

House	96	0	
Senate	46	0	(Senate amended)
House	90	0	(House concurred)

**Effective:** June 6, 1996