

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5250

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Transportation, February 25, 1997

Title: An act relating to studded tires.

Brief Description: Limiting weight of tire studs.

Sponsors: Senators Heavey and Winsley.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/18/97, 2/25/97 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5250 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Prince, Chair; Benton, Vice Chair; Wood, Vice Chair; Haugen, Goings, Heavey, Horn, Jacobsen, Morton, Oke, Patterson, Prentice and Rasmussen.

Staff: Jeff Doyle (786-7322)

Background: The state of Washington permits the use of studded tires from November 1 to April 1 of each year. A 1991 study found that 24 states allow the use of studded tires during specified time periods, while Illinois, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin prohibit studded tires.

Studies indicate that 14 percent to 35 percent of vehicles in Washington use typical studded tires. Typical studs have a steel body and are heavier than the newer generation studs currently mandated in most of northern Europe. As the tire wears, the stud protrusion increases, exacerbating road wear. Furthermore, the rate of road wear increases when the pavement is wet.

Recent study data indicate that over the course of its 30,000 mile useful life, a studded tire will remove between one-half to three-quarter tons of asphalt concrete mix. The cost of material replacement alone would range from \$8 to \$15 per tire, depending on material costs. The state of Alaska has estimated that repairing ruts caused by studded tires requires that pavement adjacent to the rutted lane also be extracted, driving the repair costs up to \$40 to \$50 per studded tire.

In Sweden, it has been long recognized that the conventional studs cause excessive pavement wear. A new low-noise, reduced road wear stud has been developed. It weighs only 0.7 gram, yet retains ice grip and durability. The reduction in weight is possible due to the use of a new polymer in the stud body.

In independent tests, steel studs had a comparatively poor grip and were ranked second to last in overall performance, compared with lightweight studs.

The newest generation of lightweight studs are estimated to reduce road wear by 50 percent, without any decrease in performance.

The state of Oregon recently passed a law mandating the use of lightweight tire studs.

Summary of Substitute Bill: Lightweight studs, which are defined as studs at least 35 percent lighter than metal studs most commonly used in the industry, are the only type approved for use in studded snow tires beginning July 1, 2003.

Wholesalers must sell only lightweight studs to tire dealers in Washington beginning January 1, 1999. Tire dealers may continue to sell the heavier metal studs until July 1, 2000.

The Department of Transportation is directed to study and make recommendations to the tire dealers association regarding the best type of lightweight stud. The study must be completed at least six months before wholesalers are required to sell lightweight studs.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: Tire stud wholesalers and dealers have an additional year to implement the new law. The Department of Transportation is directed to study and make recommendations to the tire dealers association regarding the best type of lightweight studs.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested.

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

Testimony For: Road damage of \$8 million - \$12 million per biennium can be eliminated by mandatory lightweight studs.

Testimony Against: There are a few reports from dealers in Oregon that the new lightweight studs are falling out, and further research is needed.

Testified: Senator Heavey, prime sponsor; Dave Bowers, WSDOT (pro); Craig Olson, Assn. of WA Cities (pro); Richard Nordness, WA State Tire Dealers (con); Tom Bolsen, owner tire store (concerns).