

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6673

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Commerce & Labor, February 6, 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: Senators Schow, T. Sheldon, Horn, Hochstatter, Hale and Swecker.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Commerce & Labor: 2/5/98, 2/6/98 [DPS, DNPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6673 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

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

Minority Report: Do not pass substitute.

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 Substitute Bill: Computer wires and fiber optic cables are excepted, but are subject to safety inspections.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: Computer wires and fiber optic cables are subject to safety inspections.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

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Testimony For: Computer wires are lower voltage than phone wires, and fiber optic cables do not conduct. Licensed contractors can now install phone wire. As part of construction, data communication wires are already inspected and certified under building code requirements. They could be inspected under the department's safety program. No problems have been recorded.

Testimony Against: Data cables are interconnected with power supplies and electric equipment. The terminology is too broad and might result in exclusion of more than low voltage cables. Data wires and high voltage wires are sometimes included in the same cable. Some data cables control fire and security alarm systems and HVAC systems. There are safety issues with their installation and operation. Licensing and inspection requirements could be separate.

Testified: PRO: Bob Olson, WCCCA; Shaun McLaury, Craig Paterson, Rosemary Williamson, GTE; Chris Cook, Central Telecom; Terry Vann, WA Independent Telephone Association; CON: Mike Zenk, Mike Church, Dave Johnson, IBEW; Larry Stevens, National Electrician Contractors Association; Bill Bowser, Puget Sound Elec. Apprenticeship; Janet Lewis, L&I Electrical Inspection (concerns).