

HOUSE BILL ANALYSIS

SB 5040

Brief Description: Modifying standards and requirements for the operation and inspection of boilers and other pressure vessels.

Sponsors: Senators Fairley and Horn

Hearing: March 22, 1999

Brief Summary of Bill

- The membership of the Board of Boiler Rules is updated.
- Exemptions and rule requirements for regulating boilers and unfired pressure vessels are updated.
- Small, low pressure unfired pressure vessels, and hot water heaters not containing steam, lethal substances or low flash point liquids, are exempt from regulation.
- The Department of Labor and Industries may authorize companies operating both boilers and pressure vessels to inspect both devices rather than just unfired pressure vessels.

BACKGROUND:

State law requires that boilers conform to rules formulated by the Board of Boiler Rules of the Department of Labor and Industries. The rules set standards for the manufacture, installation, repair, and operation of boilers and unfired pressure vessels. There are more than 90,000 boilers and unfired pressure vessels regulated within the state.

A boiler is an enclosed vessel that heats water to create power or heat. An unfired pressure vessel is an enclosed vessel that holds a gas or liquid under pressure.

The rules regulating boiler and unfired pressure vessels are based on nationally accepted

engineering standards and practices. In addition, the board may adopt nationally recognized standards such as the American Society of Mechanical Engineers' (ASME) code as a state standard. Boilers and pressure vessels meeting this code are accepted as in compliance with state regulations.

State regulations are enforced through annual or biannual safety inspections. Approximately 160 boiler and unfired pressure vessel inspectors are commissioned in the state. All inspectors must meet statutory qualifications. There are nine inspectors employed by the department, and about 150 inspectors working for private industry who perform safety inspections according to state requirements. If commissioned by the department, insurers of boilers and unfired pressure vessels may inspect both devices, while only companies operating unfired pressure vessels may inspect their unfired pressure vessels.

Various boilers and containers are exempt from regulation, including water tanks that operate at ambient temperature and have no air cushion.

SUMMARY OF BILL:

The membership of the Board of Boiler Rules is modified to reflect current classes of boiler and pressure vessel workers.

Rules formulated by the board may be based on internationally, as well as nationally, accepted engineering standards.

References to the ASME boiler construction code are removed. The board may adopt any published codes as part of the state standards. Compliance with the ASME code is not an indication of compliance with state regulations.

Companies operating both boilers and unfired pressure vessels may inspect either device if commissioned by the department.

The operating temperature at which water tanks that have no air cushion are exempt from regulation is raised from ambient temperature to 130 degrees or less. Unfired pressure vessels and hot water heaters that meet specified size and pressure restrictions and do not contain steam, lethal substances, or liquids with low flash points are exempt from regulation. The maximum operating temperature of another type of exempt vessel is raised from 200 to 210 degrees.

Clarifying and technical changes are made throughout the chapter.

RULES AUTHORITY: The bill does contain provisions addressing the rule making powers of an agency.

FISCAL NOTE: Not requested.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Ninety days after adjournment of a session in which bill is passed.