

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5384

As Passed Senate, March 8, 1999

Title: An act relating to studded tires.

Brief Description: Phasing in lightweight tire studs.

Sponsors: Senators Heavey, Benton, Haugen and Horn; by request of Department of Transportation.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 2/3/99, 2/9/99 [DP, DNP].
Passed Senate, 3/8/99, 38-8.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chair; Gardner, Vice Chair; Goings, Benton, Costa, Eide, Heavey, Horn, Jacobsen, Johnson, Oke, Patterson, Prentice, Sellar, T. Sheldon and Shin.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senator Sheahan.

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 and 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 \$40 to \$50 per studded tire.

The newest generation of lightweight studs are estimated to reduce road wear by at least 15 percent, without any decrease in performance.

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

Summary of Bill: Lightweight studs are the only type of stud approved for use in snow tires beginning July 1, 2005.

Wholesalers must sell only lightweight studs to tire dealers in Washington, beginning on January 1, 2000. An exception is granted for wholesalers who currently have the heavier studs in inventory. Tire dealers may continue to sell the heavier metal studs until July 1, 2001.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed, except section 4, which takes effect July 1, 2005.

Testimony For: This will result in a savings of at least \$1 million per biennium, and still enable drivers to use studded tires. Washington's law will be consistent with Idaho and Oregon if this bill is passed.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Senator Heavey; Bob Gee, NW Tire Dealers Association; Doug Cox, Les Schwab Tire Company; Ray Compton, Les Schwab Tire Company; Dave Bowers, Department of Transportation.

House Amendment(s): The House amendment removes language that would prohibit motorists from using heavier studs in snow tires. This prohibition would have taken effect July 1, 2005.