
Environment Committee

HB 2236

Brief Description: Creating a categorical exemption under chapter 43.21C RCW for certain electrical facilities.

Sponsors: Representative Upthegrove.

<p style="text-align: center;">Brief Summary of Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creates a statutory categorical exemption under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) for certain electrical facilities.
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Hearing Date: 1/13/12

Staff: Anna Jackson (786-7194).

Background:

The State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) applies to decisions by every state and local agency within Washington. One agency is usually identified as the lead agency for a specific proposal. The lead agency is responsible for identifying and evaluating the potential adverse environmental impacts of a proposal. Some minor projects do not require environmental review, so the lead agency will first decide if environmental review is needed. If the proposed project is the type of project that has been "categorically exempt" from the SEPA review process, no further environmental review is required.

Categorical exemptions are identified in both the Revised Code of Washington and the Washington Administrative Code. The Department of Ecology (Ecology) may adopt categorical exemptions by rule for the types of actions that are not major actions significantly affecting the quality of the environment. An action that is categorically exempt under the rules adopted by Ecology may not be conditioned or denied [RCW 43.21C.110].

State regulation provides that all power lines with a voltage of 55,000 volts or less are categorically exempt from the requirements of the SEPA. In addition, placing transmission lines

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of more than 55,000 volts over existing distribution lines of 55,000 volts or less are categorically exempt, as well as building electric facilities, lines, and equipment underground.

Summary of Bill:

A categorical exemption is created in statute for: (1) installing electric facilities or lines with an associated voltage of 115,000 volts or fewer; (2) building over existing distribution lines with transmission lines of 115,000 volts or more; and (3) placing electric facilities, lines, or equipment underground.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.