

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SHB 1604

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As Reported by Senate Committee On:  
Commerce & Labor, March 27, 2015

**Title:** An act relating to an occupational disease exposure reporting requirement for firefighters.

**Brief Description:** Creating a work group on occupational disease exposure for firefighters.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Labor (originally sponsored by Representatives Reykdal, Hayes, Sawyer, Van De Wege, Holy, Griffey, Riccelli, Fitzgibbon, Ormsby and Pollet).

**Brief History:** Passed House: 3/02/15, 96-1.

**Committee Activity:** Commerce & Labor: 3/25/15, 3/27/15 [DP].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Braun, Vice Chair; Hasegawa, Ranking Minority Member; Conway, Keiser, King and Warnick.

**Staff:** Mac Nicholson (786-7445)

**Background:** Under the state's industrial insurance laws, workers who, in the course of employment, are injured or disabled from an occupational disease are entitled to benefits. Depending on the disability, workers are entitled to medical, temporary time-loss, and vocational rehabilitation benefits, as well as benefits for permanent disabilities.

An occupational disease is a "disease or infection as arises naturally and proximately out of employment under the mandatory or elective adoption provisions of this title." Certain diseases that manifest in firefighters are presumed to be occupational diseases, including certain cancers, heart problems, and respiratory and infectious diseases. The presumption can be rebutted with evidence of tobacco use, physical fitness, lifestyle, non-employment activities, and other factors.

**Summary of Bill:** The Department of Labor and Industries must convene a work group to discuss establishing definitions, policies, and procedures for mandatory reporting of hazardous exposures suffered by firefighters in the course of employment.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

The work group includes representatives of firefighter unions, fire departments, fire chiefs, state fund public employers, and self-insured employers.

A report is due January 1, 2016.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: This bill deals with exposures to toxic material by firefighters. Early documentation of exposures helps people understand diseases that may develop later. Firefighters are at increased risk of disease because of their job. The workgroup will help identify different exposures and how they can be minimized.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Representative Reykdal, prime sponsor; Michael White, WA State Council of Fire Fighters.

**Persons Signed in to Testify But Not Testifying:** No one.