

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6085

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Commerce & Labor, January 27, 2016

Title: An act relating to office furniture installation, reconfiguration, and maintenance.

Brief Description: Concerning office furniture installation, reconfiguration, and maintenance.

Sponsors: Senator Baumgartner.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Commerce & Labor: 1/27/16, 1/27/16 [DPS, DNP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE & LABOR

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6085 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Baumgartner, Chair; Braun, Vice Chair; King and Warnick.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Hasegawa, Ranking Minority Member; Conway and Keiser.

Staff: Richard Rodger (786-7461)

Background: An electrical contractor license is generally required for any person or entity that engages in a business that installs, repairs, or maintains wires or equipment that conveys electric current.

Modern commercial office furniture frequently incorporates electrical distribution systems in their design. Many of these systems include what are commonly called modular "plug and play" electrical components. These components are designed by the manufacturer, are usually "UL-listed," do not have current-carrying wires accessible to the installer, and can only be installed in one manner. A "UL-listed" product is one that meets the standards of, and has been tested by, Underwriters Laboratories, a nonprofit organization dedicated to public safety.

Commercial furniture installers believe the modular electrical components are similar to plug-in appliances that do not require installation by a licensed electrician and can be safely installed by furniture installation crews and in-house maintenance personnel.

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 office furniture may also include a "power source feed" component that has exposed wires. These components are required to be installed by a licensed electrician.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Substitute): Modular electrical systems that are UL-listed and installed, reconfigured, or maintained for use in commercial furniture do not require the services of a licensed electrician. The systems are also exempt from the electrician certification requirements and inspection requirements.

These exemptions do not apply to the electrical component that has a line voltage connection that must be attached to the building's power source.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY COMMERCE & LABOR COMMITTEE (Recommended Substitute): Exempts the installation, reconfiguration, and maintenance of commercial furniture modular electrical systems from the electrician certification and inspection requirements.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill: PRO: This is another safe and sensible bill like last year's bill concerning security system installations. The bill will help small businesses doing this type of work and contains an appropriate balance between risk and benefit.

CON: We are basically talking about cubicle installations that are hard wired, involving different circuits, and different wire sizes. The units can be 110 or 220 volts. The National Electrical Code requires energy load calculations when doing these installations. This is dangerous work. Electricity is invisible and kills people. These systems should only be installed by licensed electricians.

Persons Testifying on Original Bill: PRO: Senator Baumgartner, prime sponsor.

CON: Matthew Hepner, Certified Electrical Workers of WA; Larry Stevens, NECA.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.