

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1594

As of March 26, 2019

Title: An act relating to clarifying the exemption for wiring and equipment associated with telecommunication installations.

Brief Description: Clarifying the exemption for wiring and equipment associated with telecommunication installations.

Sponsors: House Committee on Labor & Workplace Standards (originally sponsored by Representatives Chandler and Chapman).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/07/19, 97-0.

Committee Activity: Labor & Commerce: 3/26/19.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Exempts wires and equipment within the communication worker safety zone and supply space on utility poles, distribution lines, or wires from the regulations regarding electrical installations.
- Exempts electric utility-owned equipment from the regulations regarding electrical installations.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR & COMMERCE

Staff: Jarrett Sacks (786-7448)

Background: All wires, equipment, and installations that convey electric current must conform with the electrical laws of the state, which are administered by the Department of Labor and Industries (L&I). Electrical installations must comply with the National Electrical Code. Generally, an electrical contractor license is required to engage in the business of installing or maintaining wires or equipment to convey electric current, or equipment to be operated by electric current, and a certified electrician must perform the work. To be certified, an electrician must meet certain experience and education requirements. An electrical contractor license or telecommunications contractor license is required to install telecommunications systems.

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.

Certain wires and equipment are exempt from the standards requirements as well as the licensing and certification requirements. These exemptions include telephone and television wires, and wires and equipment exempt from the National Electrical Code. A separate code, the National Electric Safety Code (NESC), establishes standards for the safety of utility workers, and the public during the installation, operation, and maintenance of electric supply, communication lines, and associated equipment. The NESC provides for the separation of the power space for power distribution at the top of a utility pole, and communications space for cable and other attachments. The zone between the power space and the communications space is the communication worker safety zone.

Under the authority of the Washington Industrial Safety and Health Act, L&I has adopted rules governing the safety of utility workers, which include training requirements. The rules require that the work be performed in accordance with the NESC. A separate set of rules governs the work of electrical installations by certified electricians and related work.

A electric meter base provides the power to the electric meter.

Summary of Bill: Wires and equipment within the communication worker safety zone and supply space, as defined in the NESC, on poles supporting utility transmission or distribution lines or wires, are exempt from the regulation of electrical installations. Electric utility-owned equipment between a meter base and meter are also exempt.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This bill enables 5G broadband installations. Right now, there are only a couple of inefficient methods to install 5G. By allowing linemen to do the installations, the 5G installation process will be expedited. The bill clearly defines who does what work on a utility pole.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Dave Hanson, Washington PUD Association; Sean Bagsby, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 77 / Political Director.

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