

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5909

As of January 23, 2024

Title: An act relating to electric vehicle impoundment and storage.

Brief Description: Concerning electric vehicle impoundment and storage.

Sponsors: Senators Wilson, J., Lovick and McCune.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 1/23/24.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizes registered tow truck operators to apply for cost reimbursement for towing and storing electric vehicles.
- Establishes a three-year grant program to aid registered tow truck operators retrofit storage facilities to accommodate electric vehicles.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Staff: Brandon Popovac (786-7465)

Background: The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has previously issued guidelines for tow truck operators when towing and storing electric vehicles, especially those vehicles involved in a significant crash or that experienced a battery fire. Guideline recommendations include towing the electric vehicle on a flatbed truck or storing the vehicle at least 50 feet away from any other structure, vehicle, or combustibles.

In 2021, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) completed an investigation of three electric vehicle (EV) crashes resulting in postcrash fires and one noncrash fire involving an EV. The NTSB also examined national and international standards established

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to maximize the safety of EVs. The NTSB also reviewed emergency guidance documents supplied by vehicle manufacturers to mitigate the safety risks to first and second responders, including tow truck operators, who deal with EV crashes and high-voltage lithium-ion battery fires. The NTSB report findings were consistent with previously issued guidelines by NHTSA.

Summary of Bill: Registered tow truck operators may apply to Department of Licensing for cost reimbursement for towing, transporting, and storing EVs from public or private property. If approved, cost reimbursement is funded by the EV account and is limited to no more than \$10,000 per vehicle.

The Department of Commerce must establish a three-year grant program to aid registered tow truck operators retrofit storage facilities with additional facility protections to accommodate EVs, including the installation of containment bays or other storage facilities approved or recommended by NHTSA.

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: EV fires do occur and burn different than other vehicle fires. EV batteries can reignite, with documented instances from the tow truck industry. EV battery fires have also occurred at certain impound lots, putting other towed vehicles in storage at risk. The solution is to encase EVs with jersey barriers—ecology blocks, to ensure there is no further damage. A tsunami is coming with higher EV usage and EV towing. Tow truck drivers and company employees need protections too. There is a 90-day storage requirement for certain impounds. The bill will contribute to increasing tow operator safety and protection of other vehicles.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Jeff Wilson, Prime Sponsor; Peter Lukevich, TRAW.

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