
SENATE BILL 5450

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2025 Regular Session

By Senators Slatter, Hasegawa, Nobles, Saldaña, Shewmake, C. Wilson, and J. Wilson

Read first time 01/23/25. Referred to Committee on Environment, Energy & Technology.

1 AN ACT Relating to increasing transparency regarding sewage-
2 containing spills; adding new sections to chapter 90.48 RCW; and
3 creating a new section.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that municipal
6 wastewater treatment plant owners/operators are required by their
7 water quality permits to disclose unauthorized spills or discharges
8 containing untreated or undertreated sewage to the department of
9 ecology, but that such notices of sewage spills are not expeditiously
10 or easily made publicly available. Those who count on clean water
11 quality for their jobs in fishing or aquaculture, to enjoy their
12 recreational interests, or to pursue their cultural traditions are
13 likely to be especially impacted by sewage spills, and would
14 particularly benefit from a system of timely public notice in the
15 event of a spill. A number of other states have established systems
16 in which public notification of a spill is available in nearly real
17 time on a map posted by a water quality regulator, and in which
18 alerts can be issued to those interested in the event of a spill in a
19 particular geographic area. Therefore, it is the intent of the
20 legislature to improve the public's ability to know about sewage
21 spills that may impact them by establishing such a system.

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 90.48
2 RCW to read as follows:

3 The definitions in this section apply to sections 3 through 5 of
4 this act unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

5 (1) "Combined sewer" means structures which are designed to
6 convey both sanitary and storm sewage, and allow the overflow of such
7 combined sewage, untreated, to the waters of the state during periods
8 of high flows.

9 (2) "Sewage spill" means the intentional or accidental diversion
10 of untreated or undertreated wastes that do not meet permit
11 requirements, from any portion of a sewage treatment plant or
12 collection system, including a combined sewer, in this state.

13 (3) "Sewage treatment plant or collection system" means any
14 sewage treatment plant, water pollution control facility, related
15 pumping system, collection system, or other public sewage works.

16 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 90.48
17 RCW to read as follows:

18 (1) By July 1, 2026, the department must develop and publish a
19 public-facing website that includes, but is not limited to, a mapping
20 interface with geographic information on locations where sewage
21 spills occur that are reported to the department under individual
22 water quality permits for discharges that contain sewage. Upon the
23 receipt of sewage spill information under this chapter, the
24 department must post on the website notice of the reported discharge
25 or bypass. The notice on the department's website must include the
26 following information, as reported to the department:

27 (a) The estimated volume or rate of discharge and, once known,
28 the final volume discharged;

29 (b) The level of treatment of the discharge;

30 (c) The date and time the incident initiated;

31 (d) The location of the discharge;

32 (e) Once known, the estimated or actual time the discharge
33 ceased;

34 (f) The geographic area potentially impacted by the discharge;

35 (g) Once known, the steps taken to contain the discharge; and

36 (h) Public safety precautions that should be taken if known.

37 (2) Within a reasonable amount of time following the conclusion
38 of a reported sewage spill or bypass under this section, the
39 department must update the website to reflect the total estimated

1 volume of discharges, dates, times, and duration of the spill, waters
2 impacted by the spill, and other final spill information reported to
3 the department.

4 (3) Information pertaining to each sewage spill reported to the
5 department on or after July 1, 2026, must be retained in perpetuity
6 on the department's website.

7 (4) The department must design the website in a way that
8 effectively communicates with people who have limited English
9 proficiency.

10 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** A new section is added to chapter 90.48
11 RCW to read as follows:

12 By July 1, 2027, the department must implement a public
13 notification system, through which the public may choose to be
14 notified of untreated or undertreated sewage spills or permitted
15 sewage bypasses. Notifications by the department under this section
16 must occur no later than four hours after the receipt by the
17 department of a notice of a sewage spill or bypass. Real-time
18 notifications must reflect or link to the information made available
19 by the department under section 3 of this act.

20 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** A new section is added to chapter 90.48
21 RCW to read as follows:

22 (1) By March 15, 2026, the department must provide a list of
23 unauthorized spills or discharges containing untreated or
24 undertreated sewage reported to the department during the preceding
25 calendar year.

26 (2) By March 15, 2027, and each March 15th thereafter, the
27 department must publish and make publicly available on the website an
28 annual report of unauthorized spills or discharges containing
29 untreated or undertreated sewage that occurred during the preceding
30 calendar year that were reported to the department. The annual report
31 must include the waters impacted, duration, volume, and any action
32 taken by the department related to such sewage spills.

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