

Reducing Copper and Other Substances in Vehicle Brake Pads

Washington is the first state to enact legislation to help reduce the use of copper in vehicle brake pads. The Department of Ecology (Ecology) and the Puget Sound Partnership (PSP) developed Senate Bill (SB) 6557 using some of the work already accomplished by California's [Brake Pad Partnership](#)¹ over the past ten years.

The bill was proposed during the 2010 legislative session by Ecology, PSP, and Senator Kevin Ranker. After much collaboration with the auto industry and several environmental groups, SB 6557 was passed by the Legislature and signed into law by Governor Christine Gregoire on March 19, 2010.

Major Provisions of the Bill

- Beginning January 1, 2014 brake pads sold in Washington must not contain asbestos, hexavalent chromium, mercury, cadmium, or lead. Auto shops and other brake pad distributors may continue to sell any existing inventories of pads manufactured prior to this date.
- Brake pads manufactured after January 1, 2021 brake pads may not be sold in Washington unless they contain less than five percent copper by weight.
- A further reduction of copper, to less than .5 percent, may be possible if alternative brake friction materials, containing less than .5 percent copper, are available, effective, and safe. Ecology will work with a committee of experts to make this determination.

Ecology expects to begin formal rulemaking in July 2011. As we develop rules and move forward with implementation, we will continue the collaborative process, which was the hallmark of this law.

WHY IT MATTERS

This legislation is a significant step towards protecting and restoring Puget Sound. Copper in our waterways threatens our salmon populations. It impairs their ability to smell making them vulnerable to predators and unable to find their way to spawn.

Once copper gets into our waterways, it is difficult and expensive to remove. Reducing the copper content of vehicle brake pads, eliminates a primary source of copper before it has a chance to enter our waters and ultimately, Puget Sound.

Since Washington passed SB 6557, two similar bills were introduced in New York and Rhode Island.

Contact information

Ian Wesley
360-407-6747
ian.wesley@ecy.wa.gov

Special accommodations

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Persons with hearing loss, call 711 for Washington Relay Service.

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¹ <http://www.suscon.org/bpp/index.php>

The Road Ahead

With SB 6557 signed into law, brake pad manufacturers will begin the process of reducing the copper content of their products. Meanwhile, Ecology will develop rules and compliance criteria for implementing this bill.

By January 1, 2013, and at least every three years thereafter, manufacturers of brake pads sold in Washington must provide data to Ecology adequate to determine concentrations of antimony, copper, nickel, and zinc and their compounds. Ecology will track the data to insure concentrations do not increase by more than 50 percent.

Eight years after Ecology determines that alternative brake friction materials are available, brake pads containing more than .5 percent copper may not be sold in the State.

Brake manufacturers will use accredited laboratories to certify that brake pads comply with the law. They will also display proof of certification on all pads sold in Washington.

This focus sheet provides a basic overview of SB 6557. You can find the bill history and final bill language at <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=6557>.

How You Can Participate

Ecology will begin rulemaking in July, 2011 at which time we will have a formal stakeholder process.