HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT

March 01, 2005 Hearing Room D

1:00 P.M. Tapes 14 – 15

MEMBERS PRESENT: **Rep. Gordon Anderson, Chair**

Rep. Bob Jenson, Vice-Chair

Rep. Mary Nolan, Vice-Chair

Rep. Phil Barnhart

Rep. Bill Garrard

Rep. John Lim

Rep. Diane Rosenbaum

STAFF PRESENT: **John Houser, Committee Administrator**

Mike Reiley, Committee Assistant

MEASURES/ISSUES HEARD:

HB 2507 – Public Hearing

These minutes are in compliance with Senate and House Rules. Only text enclosed in quotation marks reports a speaker's exact words. For complete contents, please refer to the tapes.

TAPE/#	Speaker	Comments
TAPE 14, A		
002	Chair Anderson	

Calls the meeting to order at 1:09 p.m. Opens a public hearing on HB 2507.

HB 2507 – PUBLIC HEARING

009	Rep. Mitch Greenlick	House District 33. Explains how he became aware of the problem of sodium azide in automobile airbags. Introduces Dr. Eric Betterton.
037	Dr. Eric Betterton	Professor of Atmospheric Sciences, University of Arizona. Submits and begins summarizing PowerPoint presentation on sodium azide and automobile airbags **(EXHIBIT A)**.
121	Chair Anderson	Asks how the 300 degrees centigrade temperature is reached to activate the airbag.
124	Dr. Betterton	Explains that the igniter contains a chemical that is heating with 12 volts of electricity and activates the airbag.
128	Rep. Nolan	Asks if there are other commercial or industrial uses for sodium azide.
130	Dr. Betterton	Answers the military has used it for blasting caps, and it has been used as a pesticide, previously marketed as Smite. Continues the summary **(EXHIBIT A)**.
183	Chair Anderson	Asks if there are markings on containers that contain sodium azide.
187	Dr. Betterton	Answers no. Describes the static airbag test **(EXHIBIT A, Page 5)**. Explains the properties of sodium azide **(EXHIBIT A, Page 6)**. Explains that when sodium azide is mixed with water it creates hydrazoic acid **(EXHIBIT A, Page 7)**. Explains the toxicity of sodium azide **(EXHIBIT A, Page 8)**. Explains approximate airbag and azide production **(EXHIBIT A, Page 9)**. Describes large environmental releases **(EXHIBIT A, Page 10)**.
407	Rep. Barnhart	Asks about stability in liquid or gaseous form.
412	Dr. Betterton	Explains that the environmental degradation lifetime of hydrozoic acid is on the order of days to weeks. Notes that a cloud could be blown downwind.
433	Rep. Barnhart	Asks if sodium azide would be more dangerous than chlorine.

434	Dr. Betterton	Answers that chlorine breaks down very quickly.

TAPE 15, A

002	Dr. Betterton	Discusses end-of-life vehicle management **(EXHIBIT A, Page 12)**. Addresses disposal **(EXHIBIT A, Pages 13, 14)**. Mentions some possible options for addressing sodium azide issues **(EXHIBIT A, Page 15)**.
142	Rep. Greenlick	Explains that sodium azide was used as a biocide in hospitals. Notes that sodium azide poisoning is similar to cyanide poisoning.
153	Rep. Jenson	Asks how to distinguish sodium azide poisoning from cyanide poisoning.
155	Rep. Greenlick	Answers that it is complicated to diagnose. Explains homeland security concerns. Notes that some recyclers deploy the airbags when they are received to alleviate the sodium azide problem.
198	Rep. Rosenbaum	Asks if there have been efforts to address the sodium azide problem federally.
202	Dr. Betterton	Answers that he is unaware of federal regulations.
210	Rep. Lim	Asks if the sodium azide problem can wait to be addressed for two years.
214	Rep. Greenlick	Answers that the problem should be addressed soon.
234	Rep. Lim	Asks how Washington State is dealing with the issue.
240	Dr. Betterton	Explains how Washington and New York are addressing the issue through legislation.
271	Rep. Greenlick	Explains that the airbags cannot be recycled into other vehicles.
280	Rep. Lim	Asks where sodium azide is produced.
285	Dr. Betterton	Explains that it is manufactured in the United States, Japan and India.

300	Rep. Barnhart	Asks if inflating the airbags destroys the sodium azide.
310	Dr. Betterton	Explains that sodium azide is almost completely destroyed upon inflation of the air bag.
316	Chair Anderson	Asks about the costs involved for destroying them.
320	Dr. Betterton	Answers he is unsure, but notes that his mechanics at the Buick dealership destroy them by activating them.
339	Paul Cosgrove	Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers. Testifies in opposition to HB 2507. Notes that there is an International Standards Organization (ISO) workgroup worldwide on engineering specifications for airbags to address sodium azide problems.
386	Rep. Greenlick	Asks if the standard would be effective for cars in the future.
390	Cosgrove	Answers that it would be retrospective and prospective.
407	Rep. Barnhart	Asks how long the implementation of the standards would take.
415	Cosgrove	Answers that he is unsure. Explains the complicated nature of the issue.
429	Chair Anderson	Asks if there is a major danger in igniting airbags.
441	Dr. Betterton	Explains that there is little danger with igniting airbags.

TAPE 14, B

007	Cosgrove	Explains that the issue is becoming more complex as vehicles such as the BMW 7 series has seven different airbags that have to be addressed.
013	Chair Anderson	Asks if there is a danger in car fires.
015	Dr. Betterton	Explains that there are firefighters and first responders who have expressed concern about sodium azide.

030	Dr. David Stone	Environmental Toxicologist, Office of Public Health Systems, Department of Human Services. Submits and summarizes prepared testimony regarding HB 2507 **(EXHIBIT B)**.
055	Rep. Barnhart	Asks if the amount of sodium azide used in laboratories is small compared to airbags.
060	Dr. Stone	Answers and explains that some have used it for suicide.
067	Chair Anderson	Asks for an explanation of Department of Human Services fiscal impact statement form **(EXHIBIT B, Page 3)**.
070	Dr. Stone	Answers that he is not prepared to explain the fiscal impact statement.
073	Rep. Jenson	Expresses concern about the fiscal impact of staffing for a workgroup.
103	Chair Anderson	Closes the public hearing on HB 2507. Adjourns the meeting at 2:16 p.m.

EXHIBIT SUMMARY

A. **HB 2507, Sodium azide and automobile airbags, Dr. Eric Betterton, 15 pp**
B. **HB 2507, prepared testimony, Dr. David Stone, 2 pp**