

SUBJECT: Safety chain requirement for vehicles towing other vehicles

COMMITTEE: Transportation — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 7 ayes — Siebert, Y. Davis, Edwards, Hamric, Hill, Noriega, Uher
0 nays
2 absent — Alexander, Hawley

WITNESSES: For — Robert Bennett
Against — None

BACKGROUND: Transportation Code, sec. 545.410, requires cars and light trucks to use safety chains approved by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) to tow trailers, semitrailers, or house trailers unless the trailers or semitrailers are used for agricultural purposes. The purpose is to provide backup in the event the primary towing device gives way.

DIGEST: CSHB 932 would require cars and light trucks to use safety chains approved by TxDOT to tow other motor vehicles. The bill would require TxDOT to adopt rules listing chain specifications and requirements for attaching chains properly. The bill would not apply to drawn motor vehicles operated in compliance with federal motor carrier safety regulations.

The bill would take effect September 1, 1999.

SUPPORTERS SAY: Safety chains certified by TxDOT are required for towing trailers, but not for towing motor vehicles. This loophole in the law endangers the lives of all motorists, leading to preventable injuries and fatalities. When a vehicle has a properly attached safety chain, if it should become unhitched the chain gives the driver time to pull over and avert an accident.

There is no enforcement mechanism to penalize vehicle owners whose towed vehicles come loose, damaging persons and property. CSHB 932 would close a loophole to enforce the same standards for towing motor vehicles as for towing trailers. The bill would provide an enforcement measure so towing

violations could be prosecuted. Safety chains are the best method for enforcement because they are easy to spot to verify compliance.

The bill would not affect commercial towing trucks or motor carriers. It would not increase the cost of law enforcement for state or local governments.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

No apparent opposition.

NOTES:

The committee substitute remove a provision in the original bill that would have added trucks towing trailers, semitrailers, house trailers, or another motor vehicle to the safety chain requirement.