

SENATE . . . . . No. 1594

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

John Hart, Jr.

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the adoption of the accompanying bill:

An Act relative to promoting the safe operation of utility vaults.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:
John Hart, Jr.	First Suffolk
Michael F. Rush	Norfolk and Suffolk
Tackey Chan	2nd Norfolk
Mark J. Cusack	5th Norfolk
John F. Keenan	Norfolk and Plymouth
Michael O. Moore	Second Worcester
Jennifer L. Flanagan	Worcester and Middlesex
Christine E. Canavan	10th Plymouth
John P. Fresolo	16th Worcester
Walter F. Timilty	7th Norfolk
Michael D. Brady	9th Plymouth
Martin J. Walsh	13th Suffolk

**SENATE . . . . . No. 1594**

By Mr. Hart, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 1594) of John Hart, Jr., Michael F. Rush, Tackey Chan, Mark J. Cusack and other members of the General Court for legislation to promote the safe operation of utility vaults. Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy.

**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

**In the Year Two Thousand Thirteen**

An Act relative to promoting the safe operation of utility vaults.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:*

1 SECTION 1: Chapter 166 of the General Laws is amended by inserting after section 34  
2 the following sections:-

3 Section 34A. Definitions

4 “Company” shall mean a distribution company or electric company as defined in section  
5 1 of chapter 164.

6 “Inspector” shall mean one or more employees of a municipality, including the inspector  
7 of buildings, building commissioner or local inspector of a city, town or district or a municipal  
8 inspector of wires appointed under section 32. An Inspector shall not be employed by or  
9 otherwise associated with an Owner or a Company.

10 “Owner” shall mean the owner of property on which a Transformer Vault is located;  
11 except that “Owner” shall not include any “Company” as defined in this section.

12 “Transformer Vault” or “Vault” shall mean a totally enclosed structure or room in which  
13 energized network transformers, network protectors and related equipment are housed.

14 Section 34B. Application

15 Sections 34A through 34G, inclusive, shall apply to all Transformer Vaults owned, leased  
16 or otherwise controlled by an Owner and which contain equipment owned, maintained, repaired  
17 or operated by a Company, but shall not apply to Company Transformer Vaults

18 Section 34C. Scope

19 Sections 34A through 34G provide for the structural and related standards and  
20 requirements for Transformer Vaults. All Transformer Vaults shall comply with these sections.

21 Section 34D. Access

22 The Transformer Vault shall be accessible at reasonable hours to any Inspector and to the  
23 Company.

24 Section 34E. Standards

25 Transformer Vaults shall meet the following requirements:

26 (a) The Vault space shall be large enough to accommodate the transformer(s) and other  
27 equipment located within the Vault.

28 (b) The walls, wall partitions and roofs of Vaults shall be constructed of materials that  
29 have adequate structural strength for the conditions with a minimum fire resistance of 3 hours.

30 (c) Each doorway leading into a Vault from the building interior or out of a Vault to the  
31 building interior shall be provided with a tight-fitting door that has a minimum fire rating of 3  
32 hours. The Inspector may also require a fire-rated door for an exterior wall opening where  
33 conditions warrant. Each door shall be properly hinged and self-closing.

34 (d) Doors shall be equipped with locks, and doors shall be kept locked, access being  
35 allowed only to qualified persons. Personnel doors shall swing out and be equipped with panic  
36 bars, pressure plates, or other devices that are normally latched but that open under simply  
37 pressure.

38 Sidewalk hatches located within or above Transformer Vaults shall be made accessible  
39 by ladders composed of fire and heat resistant materials. The location of doorways shall be  
40 marked with reflective tape located on the floors and doors. All doorways shall be marked with a  
41 sign reading "DANGER – HIGH VOLTAGE WITHIN – KEEP OUT – ACCESS  
42 RESTRICTED TO QUALIFIED PERSONS ONLY."

43 (e) Transformer Vaults shall be constructed so as to maintain adequate ventilation of the  
44 Vault in the event of smoke or other unsafe condition. Ventilation openings shall be covered  
45 with durable gratings, screens, or louvers, according to the treatment required in order to avoid  
46 unsafe conditions yet still provide for adequate ventilation of the Vault. All ventilation openings  
47 to the indoors shall be provided with automatic closing fire dampers that operate in response to a  
48 Vault fire. Ventilating ducts shall be constructed of fire resistant material.

49 (f) Vaults shall contain 24-hour lighting with an alternate power source.

50 (g) Vaults shall be equipped with smoke detectors, carbon dioxide detectors, grounding  
51 systems, convenience, and heat detection systems.

52 (h) Materials shall not be stored in Transformer Vaults.

53 Section 34F. Inspections

54 An Inspector shall have the right to inspect any Transformer Vault located within the  
55 Inspector's jurisdiction at any time, upon giving the Owner and the Company reasonable notice  
56 of the inspection. Representatives of the Owner and the Utility shall be present at the inspection.  
57 The Inspector shall inspect the Transformer Vault to ensure that the Transformer Vault meets the  
58 standards set forth herein. Should the Inspector find that the Transformer Vault does not conform  
59 to the provisions of these sections in any material way, the Inspector shall inform the Owner of  
60 items which do not so conform and which require maintenance or repair. The Owner shall  
61 maintain or repair such items requiring same. After completion of any required maintenance  
62 and repairs, the Inspector shall perform a reinspection to ensure that the required maintenance  
63 and repairs have been completed. All inspection and reinspection fees shall be paid by the Owner  
64 of the Transformer Vault to the municipality.

65 Section 34G. Violations

66 If upon reinspection the Inspector determines that the Owner has willfully or negligently  
67 failed within a reasonable time to perform any maintenance or repair required as a result of an  
68 inspection, such Owner shall be punished by a fine of not more than one thousand dollars.