

SENATE No. 1697

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Steven A. Tolman

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 to promote the safe operation of utility vaults..

PETITION OF:

NAME:

Steven A. Tolman

DISTRICT/ADDRESS:

SENATE No. 1697

By Mr. Tolman, a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 1697) of Steven A. Tolman for legislation to promote the safe operation of utility vaults. Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy.

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION
SEE SENATE, NO. 1542 OF 2009-2010.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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In the Year Two Thousand Eleven
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An Act to promote 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
5 in section 1 of chapter 164.

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

10 "Owner" shall mean the owner of property on which a Transformer Vault is
11 located; 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
13 in which energized network transformers, network protectors and related equipment are housed.

14 Section 34B. Application

15 Sections 34A through 34F, 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-owned Transformer Vaults

18 Section 34C. Scope

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

21 Section 34D. Inspection

22 Every owner shall ensure that a Qualified Inspector performs a yearly inspection of all
23 transformer vaults. The Inspector shall inspect the vault location, size, ventilation, doorways,
24 walls, floors, ceilings, lighting, drainage and protective equipment to ensure that the Transformer
25 Vault meets the minimum standards set forth in sections 34E. Nothing in this section shall be
26 interpreted to require any public or private Inspector to perform an inspection except upon
27 payment of such fees as are customary and usual.

28 Should the Inspector find that the Transformer Vault does not conform to the provisions
29 of these sections in any material manner, the Inspector shall inform the Owner of items which do
30 not so conform and which require maintenance or repair. The Owner shall maintain or repair

31 such items requiring same. After completion of any required maintenance and repairs, the
32 Inspector shall perform a re-inspection to ensure that the required maintenance and repairs have
33 been completed. All inspection and re-inspection fees shall be paid by the Owner of the
34 Transformer Vault to the municipality.

35 Section 34E. Standards

36 Transformer Vaults shall meet the following requirements:

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

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

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

46 (d) Doors shall be equipped with locks, and doors shall be kept locked, access
47 being allowed only to qualified persons. Personnel doors shall swing out and be equipped with
48 panic bars, pressure plates, or other devices that are normally latched but that open under simple
49 pressure.

50 Sidewalk hatches located within or above Transformer Vaults shall be made accessible
51 by ladders composed of fire and heat resistant materials. The location of doorways shall be

52 marked with reflective tape located on the floors and doors. All doorways shall be marked with a
53 sign reading "DANGER HIGH VOLTAGE WITHIN KEEP OUT ACCESS RESTRICTED
54 TO QUALIFIED PERSONS ONLY."

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

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

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

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

66 Section 34F. Violations

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