

Regulation of Operation of Steam Boilers

High pressure steam boilers are tucked in basements, boiler rooms, manufacturing facilities, laundries and dry cleaners far from view of the general public. They bring us heat and light and provide electricity to power equipment . Life would not be the same without them, but with the increased quality of life and convenience comes potential danger. Pure steam (unmixed with air, but in equilibrium with liquid water) occupies about 1,600 times the volume of an equal mass of liquid water so one can imagine the devastation if uncontrolled steam is released.

W.Va. Code § 21-3-7, Regulation of Operation of Steam Boilers, was passed in 1919 and serves to regulate steam boilers carrying more than 15 pounds of pressure per square inch, with some exceptions. West Virginia does not regulate low pressure heating boilers or unfired pressure vessels. The statute requires boilers to undergo both an external and internal inspection annually and to obtain an annual Permit to Operate. Inspections and repairs are made according to standards governed by the National Board of Boiler and Pressure Vessel Inspectors. If an inspection cannot occur on or before the statutory annual inspection date, the boiler owner may apply in writing for an emergency extension of 60 days with the written consent of the insurance company. By statute, the Division may not grant more than two 60-day extensions.

Approximately 90% of the high pressure steam boilers in West Virginia are insured boilers and, therefore, inspected by commissioned insurance inspectors. These inspectors are issued a Certificate of Competency by the Commissioner of Labor after making application which includes a certificate from the National Board of Boiler and Pressure Vessel Inspectors. They receive no salary or paid expense from the State as they are employees of the insurance companies. Their continuance as a Special Inspector is contingent on their continuing in the employment of the insurance company.

Hobby boilers are boilers used only for display and demonstration purposes. These boilers are typically uninsured and are inspected by State inspectors. There is no inspection fee for hobby boilers.

Inspection Fees (uninsured boilers inspected by State inspector)

1. Boilers with less than 100 sq. ft. of heating surface.....	\$150.00
2. Boilers with 101 – 500 sq. ft. of heating surface.....	\$200.00
3. Boilers with more than 500 sq. ft. of heating surface.....	\$250.00
Fee for processing of inspection reports for insurance companies.....	\$50.00
Fee for issuing annual permits to operate boilers.....	\$50.00
Fee for commissioning insurance company boiler inspections.....	\$50.00
Fee for emergency extension of operating permit.....	\$100.00
Hobby Boiler operating permits.....	\$25.00
National Board Examinations.....	\$25.00