

Chapter 43.05 RCW
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

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RCW 43.05.005 Findings. The legislature finds that, due to the volume and complexity of laws and rules it is appropriate for regulatory agencies to adopt programs and policies that encourage voluntary compliance by those affected by specific rules. The legislature recognizes that a cooperative partnership between agencies and regulated parties that emphasizes education and assistance before the imposition of penalties will achieve greater compliance with laws and rules and that most individuals and businesses who are subject to regulation will attempt to comply with the law, particularly if they are given sufficient information. In this context, enforcement should assure that the majority of a regulated community that complies with the law are not placed at a competitive disadvantage and that a continuing failure to comply that is within the control of a party who has received technical assistance is considered by an agency when it determines the amount of any civil penalty that is issued. [1995 c 403 § 601.]

RCW 43.05.010 Definitions. Unless the context clearly requires otherwise, the definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter.

(1) "Civil penalty" means a monetary penalty administratively issued by a regulatory agency for noncompliance with state or federal law or rules. The term does not include any criminal penalty, damage

assessments, wages, premiums, or taxes owed, or interest or late fees on any existing obligation.

(2) "Regulatory agency" means an agency as defined in RCW 34.05.010 that has the authority to issue civil penalties. The term does not include the state patrol or any institution of higher education as defined in RCW 28B.10.016.

(3) "Technical assistance" includes:

(a) Information on the laws, rules, and compliance methods and technologies applicable to the regulatory agency's programs;

(b) Information on methods to avoid compliance problems;

(c) Assistance in applying for permits; and

(d) Information on the mission, goals, and objectives of the program.

(4) "Technical assistance documents" means documents prepared to provide information specified in subsection (3) of this section entitled a technical assistance document by the agency head or its designee. Technical assistance documents do not include notices of correction, violation, or enforcement action. Technical assistance documents do not impose mandatory obligations or serve as the basis for a citation. [1999 c 236 § 1; 1995 c 403 § 602.]

RCW 43.05.020 Agency programs—List of technical assistance providers. All regulatory agencies shall develop programs to encourage voluntary compliance by providing technical assistance consistent with statutory requirements. The programs shall include but are not limited to technical assistance visits, printed information, information and assistance by telephone, training meetings, and other appropriate methods to provide technical assistance. In addition, all regulatory agencies shall provide upon request a list of organizations, including private companies, that provide technical assistance. This list shall be compiled by the agencies from information submitted by the organizations and shall not constitute an endorsement by an agency of any organization. [1995 c 403 § 603.]

RCW 43.05.030 Technical assistance visit—Notice of violation.

(1) For the purposes of this chapter, a technical assistance visit is a visit by a regulatory agency to a facility, business, or other location that:

(a) Has been requested or is voluntarily accepted; and

(b) Is declared by the regulatory agency at the beginning of the visit to be a technical assistance visit.

(2) A technical assistance visit also includes a consultative visit pursuant to RCW 49.17.250.

(3) During a technical assistance visit, or within a reasonable time thereafter, a regulatory agency shall inform the owner or operator of the facility of any violations of law or agency rules identified by the agency as follows:

(a) A description of the condition that is not in compliance and the text of the specific section or subsection of the applicable state or federal law or rule;

(b) A statement of what is required to achieve compliance;

(c) The date by which the agency requires compliance to be achieved;

(d) Notice of the means to contact any technical assistance services provided by the agency or others; and

(e) Notice of when, where, and to whom a request to extend the time to achieve compliance for good cause may be filed with the agency. [1996 c 206 § 2; 1995 c 403 § 604.]

Findings—1996 c 206: "The legislature finds that many individuals and small businesses who are required to comply with laws and agency rules often do not have access to the Revised Code of Washington, the Washington Administrative Code, the United States Code, or the Code of Federal Regulations. In this case, those informed of violations do not know whether, or to what extent, the cited law or agency rule actually applies to their situation. In order to facilitate greater understanding of the law and agency rules, the legislature finds that those who make the effort to obtain technical assistance from a regulatory agency, and those who are issued a notice of correction, should be given the text of the specific section or subsection of the law or agency rule they are alleged to have violated." [1996 c 206 § 1.]

RCW 43.05.040 Time to correct violations—Revisit—Issuance of penalties. (1) The owner and operator shall be given a reasonable period of time to correct violations identified during a technical assistance visit before any civil penalty provided for by law is imposed for those violations. A regulatory agency may revisit a facility, business, or other location after a technical assistance visit and a reasonable period of time has passed to correct violations identified by the agency in writing and issue civil penalties as provided for by law for any uncorrected violations.

(2) During a visit under subsection (1) of this section, the regulatory agency may not issue civil penalties for violations not previously identified in a technical assistance visit, unless the violations are of the type for which the agency may issue a citation: (a) During a technical assistance visit under RCW 43.05.050; or (b) under RCW 43.05.090. [2001 c 190 § 1; 1995 c 403 § 605.]

RCW 43.05.050 Issuance of penalty during technical assistance visit. A regulatory agency that observes a violation during a technical assistance visit may issue a civil penalty as provided for by law if: (1) The individual or business has previously been subject to an enforcement action for the same or similar type of violation of the same statute or rule or has been given previous notice of the same or similar type of violation of the same statute or rule; or (2) the issue involves sales taxes due to the state and the individual or business is not remitting previously collected sales taxes to the state; or (3) the violation has a probability of placing a person in danger of death or bodily harm, has a probability of causing more than minor environmental harm, or has a probability of causing physical damage to the property of another in an amount exceeding one thousand dollars. [1995 c 403 § 606.]

RCW 43.05.060 Department of ecology—Notice of correction. (1) If in the course of any site inspection or visit that is not a

technical assistance visit, the department of ecology becomes aware of conditions that are not in compliance with applicable laws and rules enforced by the department and are not subject to civil penalties as provided for in RCW 43.05.070, the department may issue a notice of correction to the responsible party that shall include:

(a) A description of the condition that is not in compliance and the text of the specific section or subsection of the applicable state or federal law or rule;

(b) A statement of what is required to achieve compliance;

(c) The date by which the department requires compliance to be achieved;

(d) Notice of the means to contact any technical assistance services provided by the department or others; and

(e) Notice of when, where, and to whom a request to extend the time to achieve compliance for good cause may be filed with the department.

(2) A notice of correction is not a formal enforcement action, is not subject to appeal, and is a public record.

(3) If the department issues a notice of correction, it shall not issue a civil penalty for the violations identified in the notice of correction unless the responsible party fails to comply with the notice. [1996 c 206 § 3; 1995 c 403 § 607.]

Findings—1996 c 206: See note following RCW 43.05.030.

RCW 43.05.070 Department of ecology—Penalty. The department of ecology may issue a civil penalty provided for by law without first issuing a notice of correction if: (1) The person has previously been subject to an enforcement action for the same or similar type of violation of the same statute or rule or has been given previous notice of the same or similar type of violation of the same statute or rule; or (2) compliance is not achieved by the date established by the department in a previously issued notice of correction, if the department has responded to any request for review of such date by reaffirming the original date or establishing a new date; or (3) the violation has a probability of placing a person in danger of death or bodily harm, has a probability of causing more than minor environmental harm, or has a probability of causing physical damage to the property of another in an amount exceeding one thousand dollars. [1995 c 403 § 608.]

RCW 43.05.080 Application of RCW 43.05.060 and 43.05.070—Limited. The provisions of RCW 43.05.060 and 43.05.070 affecting civil penalties issued by the department of ecology shall not apply to civil penalties for negligent discharge of oil as authorized under RCW 90.56.330 or to civil penalties as authorized under RCW 90.03.600 for unlawful use of water in violation of RCW 90.03.250 or 90.44.050. [1995 c 403 § 609.]

RCW 43.05.090 Department of labor and industries—Consultative visit, report—Compliance inspection, citation. (1) Following a consultative visit pursuant to RCW 49.17.250, the department of labor

and industries shall issue a report to the employer that the employer shall make available to its employees. The report shall contain:

(a) A description of the condition that is not in compliance and the text of the specific section or subsection of the applicable state or federal law or rule;

(b) A statement of what is required to achieve compliance;

(c) The date by which the department requires compliance to be achieved;

(d) Notice of means to contact technical assistance services provided by the department; and

(e) Notice of when, where, and to whom a request to extend the time to achieve compliance for good cause may be filed with the department.

(2) Following a compliance inspection pursuant to RCW 49.17.120, the department of labor and industries shall issue a citation for violations of industrial safety and health standards. The citation shall not assess a penalty if the violations:

(a) Are determined not to be of a serious nature;

(b) Have not been previously cited;

(c) Are not willful; and

(d) Do not have a mandatory penalty under chapter 49.17 RCW. [1996 c 206 § 4; 1995 c 403 § 610.]

Findings—1996 c 206: See note following RCW 43.05.030.

RCW 43.05.100 Departments of agriculture, fish and wildlife, health, licensing, natural resources—Notice of correction. (1) If in the course of any inspection or visit that is not a technical assistance visit, the department of agriculture, fish and wildlife, health, licensing, or natural resources becomes aware of conditions that are not in compliance with applicable laws and rules enforced by the department and are not subject to civil penalties as provided for in RCW 43.05.110, the department may issue a notice of correction to the responsible party that shall include:

(a) A description of the condition that is not in compliance and the text of the specific section or subsection of the applicable state or federal law or rule;

(b) A statement of what is required to achieve compliance;

(c) The date by which the department requires compliance to be achieved;

(d) Notice of the means to contact any technical assistance services provided by the department or others; and

(e) Notice of when, where, and to whom a request to extend the time to achieve compliance for good cause may be filed with the department.

(2) A notice of correction is not a formal enforcement action, is not subject to appeal, and is a public record.

(3) If the department issues a notice of correction, it shall not issue a civil penalty for the violations identified in the notice of correction unless the responsible party fails to comply with the notice. [1996 c 206 § 5; 1995 c 403 § 611.]

Findings—1996 c 206: See note following RCW 43.05.030.

RCW 43.05.110 Departments of agriculture, fish and wildlife, health, licensing, natural resources—Penalty. The department of agriculture, fish and wildlife, health, licensing, or natural resources may issue a civil penalty provided for by law without first issuing a notice of correction if: (1) The person has previously been subject to an enforcement action for the same or similar type of violation of the same statute or rule or has been given previous notice of the same or similar type of violation of the same statute or rule; or (2) compliance is not achieved by the date established by the department in a previously issued notice of correction, if the department has responded to any request for review of such date by reaffirming the original date or establishing a new date; [or] (3) the violation has a probability of placing a person in danger of death or bodily harm, has a probability of causing more than minor environmental harm, or has a probability of causing physical damage to the property of another in an amount exceeding one thousand dollars; or (4) the violation was committed by a business that employed fifty or more employees on at least one day in each of the preceding twelve months. In addition, the department of fish and wildlife may issue a civil penalty provided for by law without first issuing a notice of correction for a violation of any rule dealing with seasons, catch or bag limits, gear types, or geographical areas for fish or wildlife removal, reporting, or disposal.

This section does not apply to the civil penalties imposed under *RCW 82.38.170(13). [1998 c 176 § 84; 1995 c 403 § 612.]

***Reviser's note:** RCW 82.38.170 was amended by 2013 c 225 § 118, deleting subsection (13), effective July 1, 2016.

RCW 43.05.120 Time for compliance—Extension. The date for compliance established by the department of ecology, labor and industries, agriculture, fish and wildlife, health, licensing, or natural resources pursuant to RCW 43.05.060, 43.05.090, or 43.05.100 respectively shall provide for a reasonable time to achieve compliance. Any person receiving a notice of correction pursuant to RCW 43.05.060 or 43.05.100 or a report or citation pursuant to RCW 43.05.090 may request an extension of time to achieve compliance for good cause from the issuing department. Requests shall be submitted to the issuing department and responded to by the issuing department in writing in accordance with procedures specified by the issuing department in the notice, report, or citation. [1995 c 403 § 613.]

RCW 43.05.130 Educational programs. The departments of revenue and labor and industries and the employment security department shall undertake an educational program directed at those who have the most difficulty in determining their tax or premium liability. The departments may rely on information from internal data, trade associations, and businesses to determine which entities should be selected. The educational programs may include, but not be limited to, targeted informational fact sheets, self-audits, or workshops, and may be presented individually by the agency or in conjunction with other agencies. [1995 c 403 § 614.]

RCW 43.05.140 Pilot voluntary audit program. The department of revenue, the department of labor and industries in respect to its duties in Title 51 RCW, and the employment security department shall develop and administer a pilot voluntary audit program. Voluntary audits can be requested by businesses from any of these agencies according to guidelines established by each agency. No penalty assessments may be made against participants in such a program except when the agency determines that either a good faith effort has not been made by the taxpayer or premium payer to comply with the law or that the taxpayer has failed to remit previously collected sales taxes to the state. The persons conducting the voluntary audit shall provide the business undergoing the voluntary audit an audit report that describes errors or omissions found and future reporting instructions. This program does not relieve a business from past or future tax or premium obligations. [1995 c 403 § 615.]

RCW 43.05.150 Agency immunity—Enforcement authority. Nothing in this chapter obligates a regulatory agency to conduct a technical assistance visit. The state and officers or employees of the state shall not be liable for damages to a person to the extent that liability is asserted to arise from providing technical assistance, or if liability is asserted to arise from the failure of the state or officers or employees of the state to provide technical assistance. This chapter does not limit the authority of any regulatory agency to take any enforcement action, other than a civil penalty, authorized by law. This chapter shall not limit a regulatory agency's authority to issue a civil penalty as authorized by law based upon a person's failure to comply with specific terms and conditions of any permit or license issued by the agency to that person. [1995 c 403 § 617.]

RCW 43.05.160 Liquor and cannabis board—Notice of correction.

(1) If, during an inspection or visit to a cannabis business licensed under chapter 69.50 RCW that is not a technical assistance visit, the liquor and cannabis board becomes aware of conditions that are not in compliance with applicable laws and rules enforced by the board and are not subject to civil penalties as provided for in RCW 69.50.563, the board may issue a notice of correction to the licensee that includes:

(a) A description of the condition that is not in compliance and the text of the specific section or subsection of the applicable state law or rule;

(b) A statement of what is required to achieve compliance;

(c) The date by which the board requires compliance to be achieved;

(d) Notice of the means to contact any technical assistance services provided by the board or others; and

(e) Notice of when, where, and to whom a request to extend the time to achieve compliance for good cause may be filed with the board.

(2) A notice of correction is not a formal enforcement action, is not subject to appeal, and is a public record.

(3) If the liquor and cannabis board issues a notice of correction, it may not issue a civil penalty for the violations identified in the notice of correction unless the licensee fails to comply with the notice. [2022 c 16 § 32; 2019 c 394 § 2.]

Intent—Finding—2022 c 16: See note following RCW 69.50.101.

Findings—2019 c 394: See note following RCW 69.50.563.

RCW 43.05.901 Conflict with federal requirements. If a regulatory agency determines any part of this chapter to be in conflict with federal law or program requirements, in conflict with federal requirements that are a prescribed condition to the allocation of federal funds to the state, or in conflict with the requirements for eligibility of employers in this state for federal unemployment tax credits, the conflicting part of this chapter shall be inoperative solely to the extent of the conflict. Any rules under this chapter shall meet federal requirements that are a necessary condition to the receipt of federal funds by the state or the granting of federal unemployment tax credits to employers in this state. [1995 c 403 § 619.]

RCW 43.05.902 Resolution of conflict with federal requirements—Notification. If notified by responsible federal officials of any conflict of this chapter with federal law or program requirements or with federal requirements that are a prescribed condition to the allocation of federal funds to the state, the regulatory agency notified of the conflict shall actively seek to resolve the conflict. If the agency determines that the conflict cannot be resolved without loss of benefits or authority to the state, the agency shall notify the governor, the president of the senate, and the speaker of the house of representatives in writing within thirty days of making that determination. [1995 c 403 § 620.]

RCW 43.05.905 Findings—Short title—Intent—1995 c 403. See note following RCW 34.05.328.