

Chapter 64.55 RCW
CONSTRUCTION DEFECT DISPUTES—MULTIUNIT RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS

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RCW 64.55.005 Application. (Effective until January 1, 2028.)

(1) (a) RCW 64.55.010 through 64.55.090 apply to any multiunit residential building for which the permit for construction or rehabilitative construction of such building was issued on or after August 1, 2005.

(b) RCW 64.55.010 and 64.55.090 apply to conversion condominiums as defined in RCW 64.34.020 or conversion buildings as defined in RCW 64.90.010, provided that RCW 64.55.090 shall not apply to a condominium conversion for which a public offering statement had been delivered pursuant to chapter 64.34 RCW prior to August 1, 2005.

(2) RCW 64.55.010 and 64.55.100 through 64.55.160 and 64.34.415 apply to any action that alleges breach of an implied or express warranty under chapter 64.34 RCW or that seeks relief that could be awarded for such breach, regardless of the legal theory pleaded, except that RCW 64.55.100 through 64.55.160 and 64.34.415 shall not apply to:

(a) Actions filed or served prior to August 1, 2005;

(b) Actions for which a notice of claim was served pursuant to chapter 64.50 RCW prior to August 1, 2005;

(c) Actions asserting any claim regarding a building that is not a multiunit residential building;

(d) Actions asserting any claim regarding a multiunit residential building that was permitted on or after August 1, 2005, unless the letter required by RCW 64.55.060 has been submitted to the appropriate

building department or the requirements of RCW 64.55.090 have been satisfied.

(3) Other than the requirements imposed by RCW 64.55.010 through 64.55.090, nothing in this chapter amends or modifies the provisions of RCW 64.34.050. [2019 c 238 s 216; 2005 c 456 s 1.]

RCW 64.55.005 Application. (Effective January 1, 2028.) (1) (a) RCW 64.55.010 through 64.55.090 apply to any multiunit residential building for which the permit for construction or rehabilitative construction of such building was issued on or after August 1, 2005.

(b) RCW 64.55.010 and 64.55.090 apply to conversion buildings as defined in RCW 64.90.010.

(2) RCW 64.55.010 and 64.55.100 through 64.55.160 and 64.90.620 apply to any action that alleges breach of an implied or express warranty under chapter 64.90 RCW or that seeks relief that could be awarded for such breach, regardless of the legal theory pleaded, except that RCW 64.55.100 through 64.55.160 and 64.90.620 shall not apply to:

(a) Actions filed or served prior to August 1, 2005;

(b) Actions for which a notice of claim was served pursuant to chapter 64.50 RCW prior to August 1, 2005;

(c) Actions asserting any claim regarding a building that is not a multiunit residential building;

(d) Actions asserting any claim regarding a multiunit residential building that was permitted on or after August 1, 2005, unless the letter required by RCW 64.55.060 has been submitted to the appropriate building department or the requirements of RCW 64.55.090 have been satisfied.

(3) Other than the requirements imposed by RCW 64.55.010 through 64.55.090, nothing in this chapter amends or modifies the provisions of RCW 64.90.025. [2024 c 321 s 423; 2019 c 238 s 216; 2005 c 456 s 1.]

Effective dates—2024 c 321 ss 319 and 401-432: See note following RCW 64.90.485.

RCW 64.55.010 Definitions. (Effective until January 1, 2028.) Unless the context clearly requires otherwise, the definitions in *RCW 64.34.020 and in this section apply throughout this chapter.

(1) "Attached dwelling unit" means any dwelling unit that is attached to another dwelling unit by a wall, floor, or ceiling that separates heated living spaces. A garage is not a heated living space.

(2) "Building enclosure" means that part of any building, above or below grade, that physically separates the outside or exterior environment from interior environments and which weatherproofs, waterproofs, or otherwise protects the building or its components from water or moisture intrusion. Interior environments consist of both heated and unheated enclosed spaces. The building enclosure includes, but is not limited to, that portion of roofs, walls, balcony support columns, decks, windows, doors, vents, and other penetrations through exterior walls, which waterproof, weatherproof, or otherwise protect the building or its components from water or moisture intrusion.

(3) "Building enclosure design documents" means plans, details, and specifications for the building enclosure that have been stamped

by a licensed engineer or architect. The building enclosure design documents shall include details and specifications that are appropriate for the building in the professional judgment of the architect or engineer who prepared the same to waterproof, weatherproof, and otherwise protect the building or its components from water or moisture intrusion, including details of flashing, intersections at roof, eaves or parapets, means of drainage, water-resistive membrane, and details around openings.

(4) "Developer" means:

(a) With respect to a condominium or a conversion condominium, the declarant; and

(b) With respect to all other buildings, an individual, group of individuals, partnership, corporation, association, municipal corporation, state agency, or other entity or person that obtains a building permit for the construction or rehabilitative reconstruction of a multiunit residential building. If a permit is obtained by service providers such as architects, contractors, and consultants who obtain permits for others as part of services rendered for a fee, the person for whom the permit is obtained shall be the developer, not the service provider.

(5) "Dwelling unit" has the meaning given to that phrase or similar phrases in the ordinances of the jurisdiction issuing the permit for construction of the building enclosure but if such ordinances do not provide a definition, then "dwelling unit" means a residence containing living, cooking, sleeping, and sanitary facilities.

(6) "Multiunit residential building" means:

(a) A building containing more than two attached dwelling units, including a building containing nonresidential units if the building also contains more than two attached dwelling units, but excluding the following classes of buildings:

(i) Hotels and motels;

(ii) Dormitories;

(iii) Care facilities;

(iv) Floating homes;

(v) A building that contains attached dwelling units that are each located on a single platted lot, except as provided in (b) of this subsection;

(vi) A building in which all of the dwelling units are held under one ownership and is subject to a recorded irrevocable sale prohibition covenant;

(vii) A building with 12 or fewer units that is no more than two stories; and

(viii) A building with 12 or fewer units that is no more than three stories so long as one story is utilized for parking, either above or below ground, or retail space.

(b) If the developer submits to the appropriate building department when applying for the building permit described in RCW 64.55.020 a statement that the developer elects to treat the improvement for which a permit is sought as a multiunit residential building for all purposes under this chapter, then "multiunit residential building" also means the following buildings for which such election has been made:

(i) A building containing only two attached dwelling units;

(ii) A building that does not contain attached dwelling units;

and

(iii) Any building that contains attached dwelling units each of which is located on a single platted lot.

(7) "Party unit owner" means a unit owner who is a named party to an action subject to this chapter and does not include any unit owners whose involvement with the action stems solely from their membership in the association.

(8) "Qualified building inspector" means a person satisfying the requirements of RCW 64.55.040.

(9) "Rehabilitative construction" means construction work on the building enclosure of a multiunit residential building if the cost of such construction work is more than five percent of the assessed value of the building.

(10) "Sale prohibition covenant" means a recorded covenant that prohibits the sale or other disposition of individual dwelling units as or as part of a condominium for five years or more from the date of first occupancy except as otherwise provided in RCW 64.55.090, a certified copy of which the developer shall submit to the appropriate building department; provided such covenant shall not apply to sales or dispositions listed in *RCW 64.34.400(2). The covenant must be recorded in the county in which the building is located and must be in substantially the following form:

This covenant has been recorded in the real property records of County, Washington, in satisfaction of the requirements of RCW 64.55.010 through 64.55.090. The undersigned is the owner of the property described on Exhibit A (the "Property"). Until termination of this covenant, no dwelling unit in or on the Property may be sold as a condominium unit except for sales listed in *RCW 64.34.400(2).

This covenant terminates on the earlier of either: (a) Compliance with the requirements of RCW 64.55.090, as certified by the owner of the Property in a recorded supplement hereto; or (b) the fifth anniversary of the date of first occupancy of a dwelling unit as certified by the Owner in a recorded supplement hereto.

All title insurance companies and persons acquiring an interest in the Property may rely on the forgoing certifications without further inquiry in issuing any policy of title insurance or in acquiring an interest in the Property.

(11) "Stamped" means bearing the stamp and signature of the responsible licensed architect or engineer on the title page, and on every sheet of the documents, drawings, or specifications, including modifications to the documents, drawings, and specifications that become part of change orders or addenda to alter those documents, drawings, or specifications. [2024 c 122 s 1; 2023 c 263 s 1; 2005 c 456 s 2.]

***Reviser's note:** RCW 64.34.020 and 64.34.400 were repealed by 2024 c 321 s 502, effective January 1, 2028.

RCW 64.55.010 Definitions. (Effective January 1, 2028.) Unless the context clearly requires otherwise, the definitions in RCW 64.90.010 and in this section apply throughout this chapter.

(1) "Attached dwelling unit" means any dwelling unit that is attached to another dwelling unit by a wall, floor, or ceiling that separates heated living spaces. A garage is not a heated living space.

(2) "Building enclosure" means that part of any building, above or below grade, that physically separates the outside or exterior environment from interior environments and which weatherproofs, waterproofs, or otherwise protects the building or its components from water or moisture intrusion. Interior environments consist of both heated and unheated enclosed spaces. The building enclosure includes, but is not limited to, that portion of roofs, walls, balcony support columns, decks, windows, doors, vents, and other penetrations through exterior walls, which waterproof, weatherproof, or otherwise protect the building or its components from water or moisture intrusion.

(3) "Building enclosure design documents" means plans, details, and specifications for the building enclosure that have been stamped by a licensed engineer or architect. The building enclosure design documents shall include details and specifications that are appropriate for the building in the professional judgment of the architect or engineer who prepared the same to waterproof, weatherproof, and otherwise protect the building or its components from water or moisture intrusion, including details of flashing, intersections at roof, eaves or parapets, means of drainage, water-resistive membrane, and details around openings.

(4) "Developer" means:

(a) With respect to a condominium or a conversion condominium, the declarant; and

(b) With respect to all other buildings, an individual, group of individuals, partnership, corporation, association, municipal corporation, state agency, or other entity or person that obtains a building permit for the construction or rehabilitative reconstruction of a multiunit residential building. If a permit is obtained by service providers such as architects, contractors, and consultants who obtain permits for others as part of services rendered for a fee, the person for whom the permit is obtained shall be the developer, not the service provider.

(5) "Dwelling unit" has the meaning given to that phrase or similar phrases in the ordinances of the jurisdiction issuing the permit for construction of the building enclosure but if such ordinances do not provide a definition, then "dwelling unit" means a residence containing living, cooking, sleeping, and sanitary facilities.

(6) "Multiunit residential building" means:

(a) A building containing more than two attached dwelling units, including a building containing nonresidential units if the building also contains more than two attached dwelling units, but excluding the following classes of buildings:

(i) Hotels and motels;

(ii) Dormitories;

(iii) Care facilities;

(iv) Floating homes;

(v) A building that contains attached dwelling units that are each located on a single platted lot, except as provided in (b) of this subsection;

(vi) A building in which all of the dwelling units are held under one ownership and is subject to a recorded irrevocable sale prohibition covenant;

(vii) A building with 12 or fewer units that is no more than two stories; and

(viii) A building with 12 or fewer units that is no more than three stories so long as one story is utilized for parking, either above or below ground, or retail space.

(b) If the developer submits to the appropriate building department when applying for the building permit described in RCW 64.55.020 a statement that the developer elects to treat the improvement for which a permit is sought as a multiunit residential building for all purposes under this chapter, then "multiunit residential building" also means the following buildings for which such election has been made:

(i) A building containing only two attached dwelling units;

(ii) A building that does not contain attached dwelling units; and

(iii) Any building that contains attached dwelling units each of which is located on a single platted lot.

(7) "Party unit owner" means a unit owner who is a named party to an action subject to this chapter and does not include any unit owners whose involvement with the action stems solely from their membership in the association.

(8) "Qualified building inspector" means a person satisfying the requirements of RCW 64.55.040.

(9) "Rehabilitative construction" means construction work on the building enclosure of a multiunit residential building if the cost of such construction work is more than five percent of the assessed value of the building.

(10) "Sale prohibition covenant" means a recorded covenant that prohibits the sale or other disposition of individual dwelling units as or as part of a condominium for five years or more from the date of first occupancy except as otherwise provided in RCW 64.55.090, a certified copy of which the developer shall submit to the appropriate building department; provided such covenant shall not apply to sales or dispositions listed in RCW 64.90.600(2). The covenant must be recorded in the county in which the building is located and must be in substantially the following form:

This covenant has been recorded in the real property records of County, Washington, in satisfaction of the requirements of RCW 64.55.010 through 64.55.090. The undersigned is the owner of the property described on Exhibit A (the "Property"). Until termination of this covenant, no dwelling unit in or on the Property may be sold as a condominium unit except for sales or dispositions listed in RCW 64.90.600(2).

This covenant terminates on the earlier of either: (a) Compliance with the requirements of RCW 64.55.090, as certified by the owner of the Property in a recorded supplement hereto; or (b) the fifth anniversary of the date of first occupancy of a dwelling unit as certified by the Owner in a recorded supplement hereto.

All title insurance companies and persons acquiring an interest in the Property may rely on the forgoing certifications without further inquiry in issuing any policy of title insurance or in acquiring an interest in the Property.

(11) "Stamped" means bearing the stamp and signature of the responsible licensed architect or engineer on the title page, and on every sheet of the documents, drawings, or specifications, including modifications to the documents, drawings, and specifications that become part of change orders or addenda to alter those documents, drawings, or specifications. [2024 c 321 s 424; 2024 c 122 s 1; 2023 c 263 s 1; 2005 c 456 s 2.]

Reviser's note: This section was amended by 2024 c 122 s 1 and by 2024 c 321 s 424, each without reference to the other. Both amendments are incorporated in the publication of this section under RCW 1.12.025(2). For rule of construction, see RCW 1.12.025(1).

Effective dates—2024 c 321 ss 319 and 401-432: See note following RCW 64.90.485.

RCW 64.55.020 Building permit application—Submission of design documents. (1) Any person applying for a building permit for construction of a multiunit residential building or rehabilitative construction shall submit building enclosure design documents to the appropriate building department prior to the start of construction or rehabilitative construction of the building enclosure. If construction work on a building enclosure is not rehabilitative construction because the cost thereof is not more than five percent of the assessed value of the building, then the person applying for a building permit shall submit to the building department a letter so certifying. Any changes to the building enclosure design documents that alter the manner in which the building or its components is waterproofed, weatherproofed, and otherwise protected from water or moisture intrusion shall be stamped by the architect or engineer and shall be provided to the building department and to the person conducting the course of construction inspection in a timely manner to permit such person to inspect for compliance therewith, and may be provided through individual updates, cumulative updates, or as-built updates.

(2) The building department shall not issue a building permit for construction of the building enclosure of a multiunit residential building or for rehabilitative construction unless the building enclosure design documents contain a stamped statement by the person stamping the building enclosure design documents in substantially the following form: "The undersigned has provided building enclosure documents that in my professional judgment are appropriate to satisfy the requirements of RCW 64.55.005 through 64.55.090."

(3) The building department is not charged with determining whether the building enclosure design documents are adequate or appropriate to satisfy the requirements of RCW 64.55.005 through 64.55.090. Nothing in RCW 64.55.005 through 64.55.090 requires a building department to review, approve, or disapprove enclosure design documents. [2005 c 456 s 3.]

RCW 64.55.030 Inspection required. All multiunit residential buildings shall have the building enclosure inspected by a qualified inspector during the course of initial construction and during rehabilitative construction. [2005 c 456 s 4.]

RCW 64.55.040 Inspectors—Qualifications. (1) A qualified building enclosure inspector:

(a) Must be the architect or engineer of record or another person with substantial and verifiable training and experience in building enclosure design and construction;

(b) Shall be free from improper interference or influence relating to the inspections; and

(c) May not be an employee, officer, or director of, nor have any pecuniary interest in, the declarant, developer, association, or any party providing services or materials for the project, or any of their respective affiliates, except that the qualified inspector may be the architect or engineer who approved the building enclosure design documents or the architect or engineer of record. The qualified inspector may, but is not required to, assist with the preparation of such design documents.

(2) Nothing in this section alters requirements for licensure of any architect, engineer, or other professional, or alters the jurisdiction, authority, or scope of practice of architects, engineers, other professionals, or general contractors. [2021 c 260 s 1; 2005 c 456 s 5.]

RCW 64.55.050 Scope of inspection—Definition. (1) Any inspection required by this chapter shall include, at a minimum, the following:

(a) Water penetration resistance testing of a representative sample of windows and window installations. Such tests shall be conducted according to industry standards. Where appropriate, tests shall be conducted with an induced air pressure difference across the window and window installation. Additional testing is not required if the same assembly has previously been tested in situ within the previous two years in the project under construction by the builder, by another member of the construction team such as an architect or engineer, or by an independent testing laboratory; and

(b) An independent periodic review of the building enclosure during the course of construction or rehabilitative construction to ascertain whether the multiunit residential building has been constructed, or the rehabilitative construction has been performed, in substantial compliance with the building enclosure design documents.

(2) Subsection (1)(a) of this section shall not apply to rehabilitative construction if the windows and adjacent cladding are not altered in the rehabilitative construction.

(3) "Project" means one or more parcels of land in a single ownership, which are under development pursuant to a single land use approval or building permit, where window installation is performed by the owner with its own forces, or by the same general contractor, or, if the owner is contracting directly with trade contractors, is performed by the same trade contractor. [2005 c 456 s 6.]

RCW 64.55.060 Certification—Certificate of occupancy. Upon completion of an inspection required by this chapter, the qualified inspector shall prepare and submit to the appropriate building department a signed letter certifying that the building enclosure has been inspected during the course of construction or rehabilitative construction and that it has been constructed or reconstructed in

substantial compliance with the building enclosure design documents, as updated pursuant to RCW 64.55.020. The building department shall not issue a final certificate of occupancy or other equivalent final acceptance until the letter required by this section has been submitted. The building department is not charged with and has no responsibility for determining whether the building enclosure inspection is adequate or appropriate to satisfy the requirements of this chapter. [2005 c 456 s 7.]

RCW 64.55.070 Inspector, architect, and engineer—No private right of action or basis for liability against. (Effective until January 1, 2028.) (1) Nothing in this chapter and RCW 64.34.073, 64.34.100(2), 64.34.410 (1)(nn) and (2), and 64.34.415(1)(b) is intended to, or does:

(a) Create a private right of action against any inspector, architect, or engineer based upon compliance or noncompliance with its provisions; or

(b) Create any independent basis for liability against an inspector, architect, or engineer.

(2) The qualified inspector, architect, or engineer and the developer that retained the inspector, architect, or engineer may contractually agree to the amount of their liability to the developer. [2005 c 456 s 8.]

RCW 64.55.070 Inspector, architect, and engineer—No private right of action or basis for liability against. (Effective January 1, 2028.) (1) Nothing in this chapter and RCW 64.90.610 (1)(t), (1)(oo), and (3) and 64.90.620(1)(c) is intended to, or does:

(a) Create a private right of action against any inspector, architect, or engineer based upon compliance or noncompliance with its provisions; or

(b) Create any independent basis for liability against an inspector, architect, or engineer.

(2) The qualified inspector, architect, or engineer and the developer that retained the inspector, architect, or engineer may contractually agree to the amount of their liability to the developer. [2024 c 321 s 425; 2005 c 456 s 8.]

Effective dates—2024 c 321 ss 319 and 401-432: See note following RCW 64.90.485.

RCW 64.55.080 Inspector's report or testimony—No evidentiary presumption—Admissibility. A qualified inspector's report or testimony regarding an inspection conducted pursuant to this chapter is not entitled to any evidentiary presumption in any arbitration or court proceeding. Nothing in this chapter restricts the admissibility of such a report or testimony, and questions of the admissibility of such a report or testimony shall be determined under the rules of evidence. [2005 c 456 s 9.]

RCW 64.55.090 Sale of condominium unit subject to compliance—Inspection alternative. (Effective until January 1, 2028.) (1) Except

for sales or other dispositions listed in RCW 64.34.400(2), no declarant may convey a condominium unit that may be occupied for residential use in a multiunit residential building without first complying with the requirements of RCW 64.55.005 through 64.55.080 unless the building enclosure of the building in which such unit is included is inspected by a qualified building enclosure inspector, and:

(a) The inspection includes such intrusive or other testing, such as the removal of siding or other building enclosure materials, that the inspector believes, in his or her professional judgment, is necessary to ascertain the manner in which the building enclosure was constructed;

(b) The inspection evaluates, to the extent reasonably ascertainable and in the professional judgment of the inspector, the present condition of the building enclosure including whether such condition has adversely affected or will adversely affect the performance of the building enclosure to waterproof, weatherproof, or otherwise protect the building or its components from water or moisture intrusion. "Adversely affect" has the same meaning as provided in RCW 64.34.445(7);

(c) The inspection report includes recommendations for repairs to the building enclosure that, in the professional judgment of the qualified building inspector, are necessary to: (i) Repair a design or construction defect in the building enclosure that results in the failure of the building enclosure to perform its intended function and allows unintended water penetration not caused by flooding; and (ii) repair damage caused by such a defect that has an adverse effect as provided in RCW 64.34.445(7);

(d) With respect to a building that would be a multiunit residential building but for the recording of a sale prohibition covenant and unless more than five years have elapsed since the date such covenant was recorded, all repairs to the building enclosure recommended pursuant to (c) of this subsection have been made; and

(e) The declarant provides as part of the public offering statement, consistent with RCW 64.34.410 (1)(nn) and (2) and 64.34.415(1)(b), an inspection and repair report signed by the qualified building enclosure inspector that identifies:

(i) The extent of the inspection performed pursuant to this section;

(ii) The information obtained as a result of that inspection; and

(iii) The manner in which any repairs required by this section were performed, the scope of those repairs, and the names of the persons performing those repairs.

(2) Failure to deliver the inspection and repair report in violation of this section constitutes a failure to deliver a public offering statement for purposes of chapter 64.34 RCW. [2005 c 456 s 10.]

**RCW 64.55.090 Sale of condominium unit subject to compliance—
Inspection alternative. (Effective January 1, 2028.)** (1) Except for sales or other dispositions listed in RCW 64.90.600(2), no declarant may convey a condominium unit that may be occupied for residential use in a multiunit residential building without first complying with the requirements of RCW 64.55.005 through 64.55.080 unless the building

enclosure of the building in which such unit is included is inspected by a qualified building enclosure inspector, and:

(a) The inspection includes such intrusive or other testing, such as the removal of siding or other building enclosure materials, that the inspector believes, in his or her professional judgment, is necessary to ascertain the manner in which the building enclosure was constructed;

(b) The inspection evaluates, to the extent reasonably ascertainable and in the professional judgment of the inspector, the present condition of the building enclosure including whether such condition has adversely affected or will adversely affect the performance of the building enclosure to waterproof, weatherproof, or otherwise protect the building or its components from water or moisture intrusion. "Adversely affect" has the same meaning as provided in RCW 64.90.670(7);

(c) The inspection report includes recommendations for repairs to the building enclosure that, in the professional judgment of the qualified building inspector, are necessary to: (i) Repair a design or construction defect in the building enclosure that results in the failure of the building enclosure to perform its intended function and allows unintended water penetration not caused by flooding; and (ii) repair damage caused by such a defect that has an adverse effect as provided in RCW 64.90.670(7);

(d) With respect to a building that would be a multiunit residential building but for the recording of a sale prohibition covenant and unless more than five years have elapsed since the date such covenant was recorded, all repairs to the building enclosure recommended pursuant to (c) of this subsection have been made; and

(e) The declarant provides as part of the public offering statement, consistent with RCW 64.90.610 (1)(t), (1)(oo), and (3) and 64.90.620(1)(c), an inspection and repair report signed by the qualified building enclosure inspector that identifies:

(i) The extent of the inspection performed pursuant to this section;

(ii) The information obtained as a result of that inspection; and

(iii) The manner in which any repairs required by this section were performed, the scope of those repairs, and the names of the persons performing those repairs.

(2) Failure to deliver the inspection and repair report in violation of this section constitutes a failure to deliver a public offering statement for purposes of chapter 64.90 RCW. [2024 c 321 s 426; 2005 c 456 s 10.]

Effective dates—2024 c 321 ss 319 and 401-432: See note following RCW 64.90.485.

RCW 64.55.100 Arbitration—Election—Number of arbitrators—Qualifications—Trial de novo. (1) If the declarant, an association, or a party unit owner demands an arbitration by filing such demand with the court not less than thirty and not more than ninety days after filing or service of the complaint, whichever is later, the parties shall participate in a private arbitration hearing. The declarant, the association, and the party unit owner do not have the right to compel arbitration without giving timely notice in compliance with this subsection. Unless otherwise agreed by the parties, the

arbitration hearing shall commence no more than fourteen months from the later of the filing or service of the complaint.

(2) Unless otherwise agreed by the parties, claims that in aggregate are for less than one million dollars shall be heard by a single arbitrator and all other claims shall be heard by three arbitrators. As used in this chapter, arbitrator also means arbitrators where applicable.

(3) Unless otherwise agreed by the parties, the court shall appoint the arbitrator, who shall be a current or former attorney with experience as an attorney, judge, arbitrator, or mediator in construction defect disputes involving the application of Washington law.

(4) Upon conclusion of the arbitration hearing, the arbitrator shall file the decision and award with the clerk of the superior court, together with proof of service thereof on the parties. Within twenty days after the filing of the decision and award, any aggrieved party may file with the clerk a written notice of appeal and demand for a trial de novo in the superior court on all claims between the appealing party and an adverse party. As used in this section, "adverse party" means the party who either directly asserted or defended claims against the appealing party. The demand shall identify the adverse party or parties and all claims between those parties shall be included in the trial de novo. The right to a trial de novo includes the right to a jury, if demanded. The court shall give priority to the trial date for the trial de novo.

(5) If the judgment for damages, not including awards of fees and costs, in the trial de novo is not more favorable to the appealing party than the damages awarded by the arbitrator, not including awards of fees and costs, the appealing party shall pay the nonappealing adverse party's costs and fees incurred after the filing of the appeal, including reasonable attorneys' fees so incurred.

(6) If the judgment for damages, not including awards of fees and costs, in the trial de novo is more favorable to the appealing party than the damages awarded by the arbitrator, not including awards of fees and costs, then the court may award costs and fees, including reasonable attorneys' fees, incurred after the filing of the request for trial de novo in accordance with applicable law; provided if such a judgment is not more favorable to the appealing party than the most recent offer of judgment, if any, made pursuant to RCW 64.55.160, the court shall not make an award of fees and costs to the appealing party.

(7) If a party is entitled to an award with respect to the same fees and costs pursuant to this section and RCW 64.55.160, then the party shall only receive an award of fees and costs as provided in and limited by RCW 64.55.160. Any award of fees and costs pursuant to subsections (5) or (6) of this section is subject to review in the event of any appeal thereof otherwise permitted by applicable law or court rule. [2005 c 456 s 11.]

RCW 64.55.110 Case schedule plan—Deadlines. (1) Not less than sixty days after the later of filing or service of the complaint, the parties shall confer to create a proposed case schedule plan for submission to the court that includes the following deadlines:

(a) Selection of a mediator;

- (b) Commencement of the mandatory mediation and submission of mediation materials required by this chapter;
 - (c) Selection of the arbitrator by the parties, where applicable;
 - (d) Joinder of additional parties in the action;
 - (e) Completion of each party's investigation;
 - (f) Disclosure of each party's proposed repair plan;
 - (g) Disclosure of each party's estimated costs of repair;
 - (h) Meeting of parties and experts to confer in accordance with RCW 64.55.120; and
 - (i) Disclosure of each party's settlement demand or response.
- (2) If the parties agree upon a proposed case schedule plan, they shall move the court for the entry of the proposed case schedule plan. If the parties cannot agree, either party may move the court for entry of a case schedule plan that includes the above deadlines. [2005 c 456 s 12.]

RCW 64.55.120 Mandatory mediation. (Effective until January 1, 2028.)

(1) The parties to an action subject to this chapter and RCW 64.34.073, 64.34.100(2), 64.34.410 (1)(nn) and (2), and 64.34.415(1)(b) shall engage in mediation. Unless the parties agree otherwise, the mediation required by this section shall commence within seven months of the later of the filing or service of the complaint. If the parties cannot agree upon a mediator, the court shall appoint a mediator.

(2) Prior to the mediation required by this section, the parties and their experts shall meet and confer in good faith to attempt to resolve or narrow the scope of the disputed issues, including issues related to the parties' repair plans.

(3) Prior to the mandatory mediation, the parties or their attorneys shall file and serve a declaration that:

(a) A decision maker with authority to settle will be available for the duration of the mandatory mediation; and

(b) The decision maker has been provided with and has reviewed the mediation materials provided by the party to which the decision maker is affiliated as well as the materials submitted by the opposing parties.

(4) Completion of the mediation required by this section occurs upon written notice of termination by any party. The provisions of RCW 64.55.160 shall not apply to any later mediation conducted following such notice. [2005 c 456 s 13.]

RCW 64.55.120 Mandatory mediation. (Effective January 1, 2028.)

(1) The parties to an action subject to this chapter and RCW 64.90.610 (1)(t), (1)(oo), and (3) and 64.90.620(1)(c) shall engage in mediation. Unless the parties agree otherwise, the mediation required by this section shall commence within seven months of the later of the filing or service of the complaint. If the parties cannot agree upon a mediator, the court shall appoint a mediator.

(2) Prior to the mediation required by this section, the parties and their experts shall meet and confer in good faith to attempt to resolve or narrow the scope of the disputed issues, including issues related to the parties' repair plans.

(3) Prior to the mandatory mediation, the parties or their attorneys shall file and serve a declaration that:

(a) A decision maker with authority to settle will be available for the duration of the mandatory mediation; and

(b) The decision maker has been provided with and has reviewed the mediation materials provided by the party to which the decision maker is affiliated as well as the materials submitted by the opposing parties.

(4) Completion of the mediation required by this section occurs upon written notice of termination by any party. The provisions of RCW 64.55.160 shall not apply to any later mediation conducted following such notice. [2024 c 321 s 427; 2005 c 456 s 13.]

Effective dates—2024 c 321 ss 319 and 401-432: See note following RCW 64.90.485.

RCW 64.55.130 Appointment of neutral expert—Qualifications—Duties—Admissibility of report or testimony. (Effective until January 1, 2028.)

(1) If, after meeting and conferring as required by RCW 64.55.120(2), disputed issues remain, a party may file a motion with the court, or arbitrator if an arbitrator has been appointed, requesting the appointment of a neutral expert to address any or all of the disputed issues. Unless otherwise agreed to by the parties or upon a showing of exceptional circumstances, including a material adverse change in a party's litigation risks due to a change in allegations, claims, or defenses by an adverse party following the appointment of the neutral expert, any such motion shall be filed no later than sixty days after the first day of the meeting required by RCW 64.55.120(2). Upon such a request, the court or arbitrator shall decide whether or not to appoint a neutral expert or experts. A party may only request more than one neutral expert if the particular expertise of the additional neutral expert or experts is necessary to address disputed issues.

(2) The neutral expert shall be a licensed architect or engineer, or any other person, with substantial experience relevant to the issue or issues in dispute. The neutral expert shall not have been employed as an expert by a party to the present action within three years before the commencement of the present action, unless the parties agree otherwise.

(3) All parties shall be given an opportunity to recommend neutral experts to the court or arbitrator and shall have input regarding the appointment of a neutral expert.

(4) Unless the parties agree otherwise on the following matters, the court, or arbitrator if then appointed, shall determine:

- (a) Who shall serve as the neutral expert;
- (b) Subject to the requirements of this section, the scope of the neutral expert's duties;
- (c) The number and timing of inspections of the property;
- (d) Coordination of inspection activities with the parties' experts;
- (e) The neutral expert's access to the work product of the parties' experts;
- (f) The product to be prepared by the neutral expert;
- (g) Whether the neutral expert may participate personally in the mediation required by RCW 64.55.120; and
- (h) Other matters relevant to the neutral expert's assignment.

(5) Unless the parties agree otherwise, the neutral expert shall not make findings or render opinions regarding the amount of damages to be awarded, or the cost of repairs, or absent exceptional circumstances any matters that are not in dispute as determined in the meeting described in RCW 64.55.120(2) or otherwise.

(6) A party may, by motion to the court, or to the arbitrator if then appointed, object to the individual appointed to serve as the neutral expert and to determinations regarding the neutral expert's assignment.

(7) The neutral expert shall have no liability to the parties for the performance of his or her duties as the neutral expert.

(8) Except as otherwise agreed by the parties, the parties have a right to review and comment on the neutral expert's report before it is made final.

(9) A neutral expert's report or testimony is not entitled to any evidentiary presumption in any arbitration or court proceeding.

Nothing in this chapter and RCW 64.34.073, 64.34.100(2), 64.34.410 (1)(n) and (2), and 64.34.415(1)(b) restricts the admissibility of such a report or testimony, provided it is within the scope of the neutral expert's assigned duties, and questions of the admissibility of such a report or testimony shall be determined under the rules of evidence.

(10) The court, or arbitrator if then appointed, shall determine the significance of the neutral expert's report and testimony with respect to parties joined after the neutral expert's appointment and shall determine whether additional neutral experts should be appointed or other measures should be taken to protect such joined parties from undue prejudice. [2005 c 456 s 14.]

RCW 64.55.130 Appointment of neutral expert—Qualifications—Duties—Admissibility of report or testimony. (Effective January 1, 2028.)

(1) If, after meeting and conferring as required by RCW 64.55.120(2), disputed issues remain, a party may file a motion with the court, or arbitrator if an arbitrator has been appointed, requesting the appointment of a neutral expert to address any or all of the disputed issues. Unless otherwise agreed to by the parties or upon a showing of exceptional circumstances, including a material adverse change in a party's litigation risks due to a change in allegations, claims, or defenses by an adverse party following the appointment of the neutral expert, any such motion shall be filed no later than sixty days after the first day of the meeting required by RCW 64.55.120(2). Upon such a request, the court or arbitrator shall decide whether or not to appoint a neutral expert or experts. A party may only request more than one neutral expert if the particular expertise of the additional neutral expert or experts is necessary to address disputed issues.

(2) The neutral expert shall be a licensed architect or engineer, or any other person, with substantial experience relevant to the issue or issues in dispute. The neutral expert shall not have been employed as an expert by a party to the present action within three years before the commencement of the present action, unless the parties agree otherwise.

(3) All parties shall be given an opportunity to recommend neutral experts to the court or arbitrator and shall have input regarding the appointment of a neutral expert.

- (4) Unless the parties agree otherwise on the following matters, the court, or arbitrator if then appointed, shall determine:
- (a) Who shall serve as the neutral expert;
 - (b) Subject to the requirements of this section, the scope of the neutral expert's duties;
 - (c) The number and timing of inspections of the property;
 - (d) Coordination of inspection activities with the parties' experts;
 - (e) The neutral expert's access to the work product of the parties' experts;
 - (f) The product to be prepared by the neutral expert;
 - (g) Whether the neutral expert may participate personally in the mediation required by RCW 64.55.120; and
 - (h) Other matters relevant to the neutral expert's assignment.
- (5) Unless the parties agree otherwise, the neutral expert shall not make findings or render opinions regarding the amount of damages to be awarded, or the cost of repairs, or absent exceptional circumstances any matters that are not in dispute as determined in the meeting described in RCW 64.55.120(2) or otherwise.
- (6) A party may, by motion to the court, or to the arbitrator if then appointed, object to the individual appointed to serve as the neutral expert and to determinations regarding the neutral expert's assignment.
- (7) The neutral expert shall have no liability to the parties for the performance of his or her duties as the neutral expert.
- (8) Except as otherwise agreed by the parties, the parties have a right to review and comment on the neutral expert's report before it is made final.
- (9) A neutral expert's report or testimony is not entitled to any evidentiary presumption in any arbitration or court proceeding. Nothing in this chapter and RCW 64.90.610 (1)(t), (1)(oo), and (3) and 64.90.620(1)(c) restricts the admissibility of such a report or testimony, provided it is within the scope of the neutral expert's assigned duties, and questions of the admissibility of such a report or testimony shall be determined under the rules of evidence.
- (10) The court, or arbitrator if then appointed, shall determine the significance of the neutral expert's report and testimony with respect to parties joined after the neutral expert's appointment and shall determine whether additional neutral experts should be appointed or other measures should be taken to protect such joined parties from undue prejudice. [2024 c 321 s 428; 2005 c 456 s 14.]

Effective dates—2024 c 321 ss 319 and 401-432: See note following RCW 64.90.485.

RCW 64.55.140 Payment of arbitrators, mediators, and neutral experts. (1) Where the building permit that authorized commencement of construction of a building was issued on or after August 1, 2005:

- (a) (i) If the action is referred to arbitration under RCW 64.55.100, the party who demands arbitration shall advance the fees of any arbitrator and any mediator appointed under RCW 64.55.120; and
- (ii) A party who requests the appointment of a neutral expert pursuant to RCW 64.55.130 shall advance any appointed neutral expert's fees incurred up to the issuance of a final report.

(b) If the action has not been referred to arbitration, the court shall determine liability for the fees of any mediator appointed under RCW 64.55.120, unless the parties agree otherwise.

(c) Ultimate liability for any fees or costs advanced pursuant to this subsection (1) is subject to the fee- and cost-shifting provisions of RCW 64.55.160.

(2) Where the building permit that authorized commencement of construction of a building was issued before August 1, 2005:

(a) (i) If the action is referred to arbitration under RCW 64.55.100, the party who demands arbitration is liable for and shall pay the fees of any appointed arbitrator and any mediator appointed under RCW 64.55.120; and

(ii) A party who requests the appointment of a neutral expert pursuant to RCW 64.55.130 is liable for and shall pay any appointed neutral expert's fees incurred up to the issuance of a final report.

(b) If the action has not been referred to arbitration, the court shall determine liability for the fees of any mediator appointed under RCW 64.55.120, unless the parties agree otherwise.

(c) Fees and costs paid under this subsection (2) are not subject to the fee- and cost-shifting provisions of RCW 64.55.160. [2005 c 456 s 15.]

RCW 64.55.150 Subcontractors and suppliers—When party to arbitration. Upon the demand of a party to an arbitration demanded under RCW 64.55.100, any subcontractor or supplier against whom such party has a legal claim and whose work or performance on the building in question becomes an issue in the arbitration may be joined in and become a party to the arbitration. However, joinder of such parties shall not be allowed if such joinder would require the arbitration hearing date to be continued beyond the date established pursuant to RCW 64.55.100, unless the existing parties to the arbitration agree otherwise. Nothing in RCW 64.55.010 through 64.55.090 shall be construed to release, modify, or otherwise alleviate the liabilities or responsibilities that any party may have towards any other party, contractor, or subcontractor. [2005 c 456 s 16.]

RCW 64.55.160 Offers of judgment—Costs and fees. (1) On or before the 60th day following completion of the mediation pursuant to RCW 64.55.120(4) and following filing and service of the complaint, the declarant, association, or party unit owner may serve on an adverse party an offer to allow judgment to be entered. The offer of judgment shall specify the amount of damages, not including costs or fees, that the declarant, association, or party unit owner is offering to pay or receive. A declarant's offer shall also include its commitment to pay costs and fees that may be awarded as provided in this section. The declarant, association, or party unit owner may make more than one offer of judgment so long as each offer is timely made. Each subsequent offer supersedes and replaces the previous offer. Any offer not accepted within 21 days of the service of that offer is deemed rejected and withdrawn and evidence thereof is not admissible and may not be provided to the court or arbitrator except in a proceeding to determine costs and fees or as part of the motion identified in subsection (2) of this section.

(2) A declarant's offer must include a demonstration of ability to pay damages, costs, and fees, including reasonable attorneys' fees, within thirty days of acceptance of the offer of judgment. The demonstration of ability to pay shall include a sworn statement signed by the declarant, the attorney representing the declarant, and, if any insurance proceeds will be used to fund any portion of the offer, an authorized representative of the insurance company. If the association or party unit owner disputes the adequacy of the declarant's demonstration of ability to pay, the association or party unit owner may file a motion with the court requesting a ruling on the adequacy of the declarant's demonstration of ability to pay. Upon filing of such motion, the deadline for a response to the offer shall be tolled from the date the motion is filed until the court has ruled.

(3) An association or party unit owner that accepts the declarant's offer of judgment shall be deemed the prevailing party and, in addition to recovery of the amount of the offer, shall be entitled to a costs and fees award, including reasonable attorneys' fees, in an amount to be determined by the court in accordance with applicable law.

(4) If the amount of the final nonappealable or nonappealed judgment, exclusive of costs or fees, is not more favorable to the offeree than the offer of judgment, then the offeror is deemed the prevailing party for purposes of this section only and is entitled to an award of costs and fees, including reasonable attorneys' fees, incurred after the date the last offer of judgment was rejected and through the date of entry of a final nonappealable or nonappealed judgment, in an amount to be determined by the court in accordance with applicable law. The nonprevailing party shall not be entitled to receive any award of costs and fees.

(5) If the final nonappealable or nonappealed judgment on damages, not including costs or fees, is more favorable to the offeree than the last offer of judgment, then the court shall determine which party is the prevailing party and shall determine the amount of the costs and fees award, including reasonable attorneys' fees, in accordance with applicable law.

(6) Notwithstanding any other provision in this section, with respect to claims brought by an association or unit owner, the liability for declarant's costs and fees, including reasonable attorneys' fees, shall:

(a) With respect to claims brought by an association, not exceed five percent of the assessed value of the condominium as a whole, which is determined by the aggregate tax-assessed value of all units at the time of the award; and

(b) With respect to claims brought by a party unit owner, not exceed five percent of the assessed value of the unit at the time of the award. [2023 c 337 s 12; 2005 c 456 s 17.]

RCW 64.55.901 Effective date—2005 c 456. This act takes effect August 1, 2005. [2005 c 456 s 24.]