

RCW 49.12.145 Complaint of noncompliance—Investigation—Penalties.

*** CHANGE IN 2026 *** (SEE 6039-S.SL) ***

(1)(a) If a complainant files a complaint with the department of labor and industries alleging a violation of RCW 49.28.140, the department shall investigate the complaint.

(b) The department may not investigate any such alleged violation of rights that occurred more than three years before the date that the complainant filed the complaint.

(c) Upon the investigation of a complaint, the department shall issue either a citation and notice of assessment or a determination of compliance, within 90 days after the date on which the department received the complaint, unless the complaint is otherwise resolved. The department may extend the period by providing advance written notice to the complainant and the employer setting forth good cause for an extension of the period and specifying the duration of the extension.

(d) The department shall send a citation and notice of assessment or the determination of compliance to both the employer and the complainant by service of process or using a method by which the mailing can be tracked, or the delivery can be confirmed to their last known addresses.

(2) If the department of labor and industries investigation finds that the complainant's allegation cannot be substantiated, the department shall issue a closure letter to the complainant and the employer detailing such finding.

(3)(a) If the department of labor and industries finds a violation of RCW 49.28.140, the department shall order the employer to pay the department a civil penalty.

(b) Except as provided otherwise in this chapter, the maximum penalty is \$1,000 for each violation, up to three violations. If there are four or more violations of this chapter for a health care facility, the employer is subject to a civil penalty of \$2,500 for the fourth violation, and \$5,000 for each subsequent violation.

(c) The department may not assess a civil penalty if the employer reasonably relied on: (i) A rule related to any of the requirements of RCW 49.28.140; (ii) a written order, ruling, approval, opinion, advice, determination, or interpretation of the director; or (iii) an interpretive or administrative policy issued by the department and filed with the office of the code reviser. In accordance with the department's retention schedule obligations under chapter 40.14 RCW, the department shall maintain a complete and accurate record of all written orders, rulings, approvals, opinions, advice, determinations, and interpretations for purposes of determining whether an employer is immune from civil penalties under (b) of this subsection.

(4) The department of labor and industries may, at any time, waive or reduce a civil penalty assessed under this section if the director of the department determines that the employer has taken corrective action to resolve the violation.

(5) The department of labor and industries shall deposit all civil penalties paid under this section in the supplemental pension fund established under RCW 51.44.033. [2023 c 114 s 12.]

Effective date—2023 c 114: See note following RCW 70.41.410.