

**RCW 9.73.260 Pen registers, trap and trace devices, cell site simulator devices.** (1) As used in this section:

(a) "Wire communication" means any aural transfer made in whole or in part through the use of facilities for the transmission of communications by the aid of wire, cable, or other like connection between the point of origin and the point of reception, including the use of such connection in a switching station, furnished or operated by any person engaged in providing or operating such facilities for the transmission of intrastate, interstate, or foreign communications, and such term includes any electronic storage of such communication.

(b) "Electronic communication" means any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data, or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic, photoelectronic, or photo-optical system, but does not include:

(i) Any wire or oral communication;

(ii) Any communication made through a tone-only paging device; or

(iii) Any communication from a tracking device, but solely to the extent the tracking device is owned by the applicable law enforcement agency.

(c) "Electronic communication service" means any service that provides to users thereof the ability to send or receive wire or electronic communications.

(d) "Pen register" means a device that records or decodes electronic or other impulses that identify the numbers dialed or otherwise transmitted on the telephone line to which such device is attached, but such term does not include any device used by a provider or customer of a wire or electronic communication service for billing, or recording as an incident to billing, for communications services provided by such provider or any device used by a provider or customer of a wire communication service for cost accounting or other like purposes in the ordinary course of its business.

(e) "Trap and trace device" means a device that captures the incoming electronic or other impulses that identify the originating number of an instrument or device from which a wire or electronic communication was transmitted.

(f) "Cell site simulator device" means a device that transmits or receives radio waves for the purpose of conducting one or more of the following operations: (i) Identifying, locating, or tracking the movements of a communications device; (ii) intercepting, obtaining, accessing, or forwarding the communications, stored data, or metadata of a communications device; (iii) affecting the hardware or software operations or functions of a communications device; (iv) forcing transmissions from or connections to a communications device; (v) denying a communications device access to other communications devices, communications protocols, or services; or (vi) spoofing or simulating a communications device, cell tower, cell site, or service including, but not limited to, an international mobile subscriber identity catcher or other invasive cell phone or telephone surveillance or eavesdropping device that mimics a cell phone tower and sends out signals to cause cell phones in the area to transmit their locations, identifying information, and communications content, or a passive interception device or digital analyzer that does not send signals to a communications device under surveillance. A cell site simulator device does not include any device used or installed by an electric utility, as defined in RCW 19.280.020, solely to the extent such device is used by that utility to measure electrical

usage, to provide services to customers, or to operate the electric grid.

(2) No person may install or use a pen register, trap and trace device, or cell site simulator device without a prior court order issued under this section except as provided under subsection (6) of this section or RCW 9.73.070.

(3) A law enforcement officer may apply for and the superior court may issue orders and extensions of orders authorizing the installation and use of pen registers, trap and trace devices, and cell site simulator devices as provided in this section. The application shall be under oath and shall include the identity of the officer making the application and the identity of the law enforcement agency conducting the investigation. The applicant must certify that the information likely to be obtained is relevant to an ongoing criminal investigation being conducted by that agency.

(4) If the court finds that the information likely to be obtained by such installation and use is relevant to an ongoing criminal investigation and finds that there is probable cause to believe that the pen register, trap and trace device, or cell site simulator device will lead to obtaining evidence of a crime, contraband, fruits of crime, things criminally possessed, weapons, or other things by means of which a crime has been committed or reasonably appears about to be committed, or will lead to learning the location of a person who is unlawfully restrained or reasonably believed to be a witness in a criminal investigation or for whose arrest there is probable cause, the court shall enter an ex parte order authorizing the installation and use of a pen register, trap and trace device, or cell site simulator device. The order shall specify:

(a) (i) In the case of a pen register or trap and trace device, the identity, if known, of the person to whom is leased or in whose name is listed the telephone line to which the pen register or trap and trace device is to be attached; or

(ii) In the case of a cell site simulator device, the identity, if known, of (A) the person to whom is subscribed or in whose name is subscribed the electronic communications service utilized by the device to which the cell site simulator device is to be used and (B) the person who possesses the device to which the cell site simulator device is to be used;

(b) The identity, if known, of the person who is the subject of the criminal investigation;

(c) (i) In the case of a pen register or trap and trace device, the number and, if known, physical location of the telephone line to which the pen register or trap and trace device is to be attached and, in the case of a trap and trace device, the geographic limits of the trap and trace order; or

(ii) In the case of a cell site simulator device: (A) The telephone number or other unique subscriber account number identifying the wire or electronic communications service account used by the device to which the cell site simulator device is to be attached or used; (B) if known, the physical location of the device to which the cell site simulator device is to be attached or used; (C) the type of device, and the communications protocols being used by the device, to which the cell site simulator device is to be attached or used; (D) the geographic area that will be covered by the cell site simulator device; (E) all categories of metadata, data, or information to be collected by the cell site simulator device from the targeted device including, but not limited to, call records and geolocation

information; (F) whether or not the cell site simulator device will incidentally collect metadata, data, or information from any parties or devices not specified in the court order, and if so, what categories of information or metadata will be collected; and (G) any disruptions to access or use of a communications or internet access network that may be created by use of the device; and

(d) A statement of the offense to which the information likely to be obtained by the pen register, trap and trace device, or cell site simulator device relates.

The order shall direct, if the applicant has requested, the furnishing of information, facilities, and technical assistance necessary to accomplish the installation of the pen register, trap and trace device, or cell site simulator device. An order issued under this section shall authorize the installation and use of a: (i) Pen register or a trap and trace device for a period not to exceed sixty days; and (ii) cell site simulator device for sixty days. An extension of the original order may only be granted upon: A new application for an order under subsection (3) of this section; and a showing that there is a probability that the information or items sought under this subsection are more likely to be obtained under the extension than under the original order. No extension beyond the first extension shall be granted unless: There is a showing that there is a high probability that the information or items sought under this subsection are much more likely to be obtained under the second or subsequent extension than under the original order; and there are extraordinary circumstances such as a direct and immediate danger of death or serious bodily injury to a law enforcement officer. The period of extension shall be for a period not to exceed sixty days.

An order authorizing or approving the installation and use of a pen register, trap and trace device, or cell site simulator device shall direct that the order be sealed until otherwise ordered by the court and that the person owning or leasing the line to which the pen register, trap and trace device, and cell site simulator device is attached or used, or who has been ordered by the court to provide assistance to the applicant, not disclose the existence of the pen register, trap and trace device, or cell site simulator device or the existence of the investigation to the listed subscriber or to any other person, unless or until otherwise ordered by the court.

(5) Upon the presentation of an order, entered under subsection (4) of this section, by an officer of a law enforcement agency authorized to install and use a pen register under this chapter, a provider of wire or electronic communication service, landlord, custodian, or other person shall furnish such law enforcement officer forthwith all information, facilities, and technical assistance necessary to accomplish the installation of the pen register unobtrusively and with a minimum of interference with the services that the person so ordered by the court accords the party with respect to whom the installation and use is to take place, if such assistance is directed by a court order as provided in subsection (4) of this section.

Upon the request of an officer of a law enforcement agency authorized to receive the results of a trap and trace device under this chapter, a provider of a wire or electronic communication service, landlord, custodian, or other person shall install such device forthwith on the appropriate line and shall furnish such law enforcement officer all additional information, facilities, and technical assistance including installation and operation of the

device unobtrusively and with a minimum of interference with the services that the person so ordered by the court accords the party with respect to whom the installation and use is to take place, if such installation and assistance is directed by a court order as provided in subsection (4) of this section. Unless otherwise ordered by the court, the results of the trap and trace device shall be furnished to the officer of a law enforcement agency, designated in the court order, at reasonable intervals during regular business hours for the duration of the order.

A provider of a wire or electronic communication service, landlord, custodian, or other person who furnishes facilities or technical assistance pursuant to this subsection shall be reasonably compensated by the law enforcement agency that requests the facilities or assistance for such reasonable expenses incurred in providing such facilities and assistance.

No cause of action shall lie in any court against any provider of a wire or electronic communication service, its officers, employees, agents, or other specified persons for providing information, facilities, or assistance in accordance with the terms of a court order under this section. A good faith reliance on a court order under this section, a request pursuant to this section, a legislative authorization, or a statutory authorization is a complete defense against any civil or criminal action brought under this chapter or any other law.

(6) (a) Notwithstanding any other provision of this chapter, a law enforcement officer and a prosecuting attorney or deputy prosecuting attorney who jointly and reasonably determine that there is probable cause to believe that an emergency situation exists that involves immediate danger of death or serious bodily injury to any person that requires the installation and use of a pen register, trap and trace device, or cell site simulator device before an order authorizing such installation and use can, with due diligence, be obtained, and there are grounds upon which an order could be entered under this chapter to authorize such installation and use, may have installed and use a pen register, trap and trace device, or cell site simulator device if, within forty-eight hours after the installation has occurred, or begins to occur, an order approving the installation or use is issued in accordance with subsection (4) of this section. In the absence of an authorizing order, such use shall immediately terminate when the information sought is obtained, when the application for the order is denied or when forty-eight hours have lapsed since the installation of the pen register, trap and trace device, or cell site simulator device, whichever is earlier. If an order approving the installation or use is not obtained within forty-eight hours, any information obtained is not admissible as evidence in any legal proceeding. The knowing installation or use by any law enforcement officer of a pen register, trap and trace device, or cell site simulator device pursuant to this subsection without application for the authorizing order within forty-eight hours of the installation shall constitute a violation of this chapter and be punishable as a gross misdemeanor. A provider of a wire or electronic service, landlord, custodian, or other person who furnished facilities or technical assistance pursuant to this subsection shall be reasonably compensated by the law enforcement agency that requests the facilities or assistance for such reasonable expenses incurred in providing such facilities and assistance.

(b) A law enforcement agency that authorizes the installation of a pen register, trap and trace device, or cell site simulator device under this subsection (6) shall file a monthly report with the administrator for the courts. The report shall indicate the number of authorizations made, the date and time of each authorization, whether a court authorization was sought within forty-eight hours, and whether a subsequent court authorization was granted.

(c) A law enforcement agency authorized to use a cell site simulator device in accordance with this section must: (i) Take all steps necessary to limit the collection of any information or metadata to the target specified in the applicable court order; (ii) take all steps necessary to permanently delete any information or metadata collected from any party not specified in the applicable court order immediately following such collection and must not transmit, use, or retain such information or metadata for any purpose whatsoever; and (iii) delete any information or metadata collected from the target specified in the court order within thirty days if there is no longer probable cause to support the belief that such information or metadata is evidence of a crime.

(7) (a) If an application for the installation and use of a pen register, trap and trace device, or cell site simulator device is for the purpose of investigating or recovering evidence that relates to an investigation that alleges criminal liability for the provision, receipt, attempted provision or receipt, assistance in the provision or receipt, or attempted assistance in the provision or receipt of protected health care services as defined in RCW 7.115.010 that are lawful in the state of Washington, the applicant shall include an attestation, made under penalty of perjury, stating that the application seeks information related to the provision, receipt, attempted provision or receipt, assistance in the provision or receipt, or attempted assistance in the provision or receipt of protected health care services as defined in RCW 7.115.010 that are lawful in the state of Washington.

(b) The court shall not issue an order for the installation and use of pen registers, trap and trace devices, and cell site simulator devices for the purpose of investigating or recovering evidence that relates to an investigation that alleges criminal liability for the provision, receipt, attempted provision or receipt, assistance in the provision or receipt, or attempted assistance in the provision or receipt of protected health care services as defined in RCW 7.115.010 that are lawful in the state of Washington. [2023 c 193 s 6; 2015 c 222 s 2; 1998 c 217 s 1.]

**Effective date—2023 c 193:** See note following RCW 7.115.020.

**Effective date—2015 c 222:** See note following RCW 9.73.270.

*Local government reimbursement claims: RCW 4.92.280.*