

RCW 14.08.122 Adoption of regulations by airport operator for airport rental and use and collection of charges. An airport operator may adopt all regulations necessary for rental and use of airport facilities and for the expeditious collection of airport charges. The regulations may also establish procedures for the enforcement of these regulations by the airport operator. The regulations shall include the following:

(1) Procedures authorizing airport personnel to take reasonable measures including, but not limited to, the use of chains, ropes, and locks to secure aircraft within the airport facility so that the aircraft are in the possession and control of the airport operator and cannot be removed from the airport. These procedures may be used if an owner hangaring or parking an aircraft at the airport fails, after being notified that charges are owing and of the owner's right to contest that such charges are owing, to pay the airport charges owed or to commence legal proceedings. Notification shall be by registered mail to the owner at his or her last known address. In the case of an aircraft where an owner's address cannot be determined or obtained after reasonable effort, the airport operator need not give such notice prior to securing the aircraft. At the time of securing the aircraft, an authorized airport employee shall attach to the aircraft a readily visible notice and shall make a reasonable attempt to send a copy of the notice to the owner at his or her last known address by registered mail, return receipt requested, and an additional copy of the notice by first-class mail. The notice shall be of a reasonable size and shall contain the following information:

- (a) The date and time the notice was attached;
- (b) A reasonable description of the aircraft;
- (c) The identity of the authorized employee;
- (d) The amount of airport charges owing;
- (e) A statement that if the account is not paid in full within ninety days from the time the notice was attached the aircraft may be sold at public auction to satisfy the airport charges;
- (f) A statement of the owner's right to commence legal proceedings to contest the charges owing and to have the aircraft released upon posting of an adequate cash bond or other security; and
- (g) The address and telephone number where additional information may be obtained concerning the release of the aircraft.

(2) Procedures authorizing airport personnel at their discretion to move aircraft to an area within the airport operator's control or for storage with private persons under the airport operator's control as bailees of the airport facility. Costs of any such procedure shall be paid by the aircraft's owner.

(3) If an aircraft is secured under subsection (1) of this section or moved under conditions authorized by subsection (2) of this section the owner who is obligated for hangaring or parking or other airport charges may regain possession of the aircraft by:

- (a) Making arrangements satisfactory with the airport operator for the immediate removal of the aircraft from the airport's hangar, or making arrangements for authorized parking; and
- (b) By making payment to the airport operator of all airport charges or by posting with the airport operator a sufficient cash bond or other security acceptable to such operator, to be held in trust by the airport operator pending written agreement of the parties with respect to payment by the aircraft owner of the amount owing, or pending resolution of charges in a civil action in a court of competent jurisdiction. Upon written agreement or judicial resolution,

the trust shall terminate and the airport operator shall receive so much of the bond or other security as is necessary to satisfy the agreement, or any judgment, costs, and interest as may be awarded to the airport operator. The balance shall be refunded immediately to the owner at the owner's last known address by registered mail, return receipt requested. The airport operator shall send to the owner by first-class mail a notice that the balance of funds was forwarded to him or her by registered mail, return receipt requested.

(4) If an aircraft parked or hangared at an airport is abandoned, the airport operator may authorize the public sale of the aircraft by authorized personnel to the highest and best bidder for cash as follows:

(a) If an aircraft has been secured by the airport operator under subsection (1) of this section and is not released to the owner under the bonding provisions of this section within ninety days after notifying or attempting to notify the owner under subsection (1) of this section, or in all other cases, for ninety days after the airport operator secures the aircraft, the aircraft shall be conclusively presumed to have been abandoned by the owner;

(b) Before the aircraft is sold, the owner of the aircraft shall be given at least twenty days' notice of sale by registered mail, return receipt requested, if the name and address of the owner are known, and the notice of sale shall be published at least once, more than ten but less than twenty days before the sale, in a newspaper of general circulation in the county in which the airport is located. The notice shall include the name of the aircraft, if any, its aircraft identification number, the last known owner and address, the time and place of sale, the amount of airport charges that will be owing at the time of sale, a reasonable description of the aircraft to be sold and a statement that the airport operator may bid all or part of its airport charges at the sale and may become a purchaser at the sale;

(c) Before the aircraft is sold, any person seeking to redeem an impounded aircraft under this section may commence a lawsuit in the superior court of the county in which the aircraft was impounded, to contest the validity of the impoundment or the amount of airport charges owing. Such lawsuit must be commenced within ten days of the date the notification was provided under subsection (1) of this section, or the right to a hearing is waived and the owner is liable for any airport charges owing the airport operator. In the event of litigation, the prevailing party is entitled to reasonable attorneys' fees and costs;

(d) The proceeds of a sale under this section shall first be applied to payment of airport charges owed. The balance, if any, shall be deposited with the department of revenue to be held in trust for the owner or owners and lienholders for a period of one year from the date of sale. If more than one owner appears on the aircraft title, and/or if any liens appear on the title, the department must, if a claim is made, interplead the balance into a court of competent jurisdiction for distribution. The department may release the balance to the legal owner provided that the claim is made within one year of sale and only one legal owner and no lienholders appear on the title. If no valid claim is made within one year of the date of sale, the excess funds from the sale shall be deposited in the aeronautics account created under RCW 82.42.090. If the sale is for a sum less than the applicable airport charges, the airport operator is entitled to assert a claim against the aircraft owner or owners for the deficiency;

(e) In the event that no one purchases the aircraft at a sale, or that the aircraft is not removed from the premises or other arrangements are not made within ten days of the sale, title to the aircraft shall revert to the airport operator.

(5) The regulations authorized under this section shall be enforceable only if:

(a) The airport operator has had its tariff and/or regulations, including any and all regulations authorizing the impoundment of an aircraft that is the subject of delinquent airport charges, conspicuously posted at the airport manager's office at all times;

(b) All impounding remedies available to the airport operator are included in any written contract for airport charges between an airport operator and an aircraft owner; and

(c) All rules and regulations authorized under this section are adopted either pursuant to chapter 34.05 RCW, or by resolution of the appropriate legislative authority, as applicable. [2022 c 56 s 1; 1999 c 302 s 1; 1987 c 254 s 2.]