

RCW 19.146.235 Director's authority to conduct investigations and examinations—Rules—Penalty. The director or a designee has authority to conduct investigations and examinations as provided in this section.

(1) For the purposes of investigating violations or complaints arising under this chapter, the director or his or her designee may make an investigation of the operations of any mortgage broker or loan originator as often as necessary in order to carry out the purposes of this chapter.

(2) Every mortgage broker shall make available to the director or a designee its books and records relating to its operations.

(a) For the purpose of examinations, the director or his or her designee may have access to such books and records during normal business hours and interview the officers, principals, loan originators, employees, independent contractors, and agents of the licensee concerning their business.

(b) For the purposes of investigating violations or complaints arising under this chapter, the director may at any time, either personally or by a designee, investigate the business, including but not limited to the books, accounts, records, and files used therein, of every licensee and of every person engaged in the business of mortgage brokering, whether such a person acts or claims to act under, or without the authority of, this chapter.

(c) The director or designated person may direct, subpoena, or order the attendance of and examine under oath all persons whose testimony may be required about the loans or the business or subject matter of any such examination or investigation, and may direct, subpoena, or order such person to produce books, accounts, records, files, and any other documents the director or designated person deems relevant to the inquiry.

(3) The director may visit, either personally or by designee, the licensee's place or places of business to conduct an examination. The scope of the examination is limited to documents and information necessary to determine compliance with this chapter and attendant rules. In general, the examination scope may include:

(a) A review for trust accounting compliance;

(b) Loan file review to determine the mortgage broker's compliance with this chapter and applicable federal regulations covering the business of mortgage brokering and lending;

(c) Interviews for the purpose of understanding business and solicitation practices, transactional events, disclosure compliance, complaint resolution, or determining specific compliance with this chapter and the attendant rules; and

(d) A review of general business books and records, including employee records, for the purpose of determining specific compliance with this chapter and the attendant rules.

(4) The purpose of an examination is to make certain that licensees are conducting business in compliance with the law. Therefore, protocols for examination findings and corrective action directed from an examination must be established by rule of the director. To accomplish this purpose, these protocols must include the following:

(a) A reporting mechanism from the director to the licensee;

(b) A process for clear notification of violations and an opportunity for response by the licensee; and

(c) The criteria by which the frequency of examinations will be determined.

(5) If the examination findings clearly identify the need to expand the scope of the examination, the director or a designee, upon five days' written notification to the licensee with an explanation of the need, may:

(a) Expand the examination review to locations other than the examined location regardless of the number of years a location has held a license; or

(b) Expand the time period of the examination beyond the five-year period of licensing, provided the expansion of time does not exceed a date certain identified in the written notification in this subsection.

(6) The director or a designee may consider reports made by independent certified professionals for the mortgage broker covering the same general subject matter as the examination. The director or a designee may incorporate all or part of the report in the report of the examination.

(7) The director may retain attorneys, accountants, or other professionals and specialists as examiners, auditors, or investigators to conduct or assist in the conduct of examinations or investigations. The cost of these services for investigations only must be billed in accordance with RCW 19.146.228.

(8) The director may establish by rule travel costs for examination of out-of-state entities.

(9) (a) No person subject to examination or investigation under this chapter may knowingly withhold, abstract, remove, mutilate, destroy, or secrete any books, records, computer records, or other information.

(b) A person who commits an act under (a) of this subsection is guilty of a class B felony punishable under RCW 9A.20.021(1)(b) or punishable by a fine of not more than twenty thousand dollars, or both. [2009 c 528 s 6; 2006 c 19 s 16; 1997 c 106 s 14; 1994 c 33 s 17; 1993 c 468 s 11.]

Effective date—License requirement—Implementation—2009 c 528: See notes following RCW 19.146.010.

Severability—1997 c 106: See note following RCW 19.146.010.

Adoption of rules—Severability—1993 c 468: See notes following RCW 19.146.0201.

Effective dates—1993 c 468: See note following RCW 19.146.200.