

**Chapter 458-29A WAC  
LEASEHOLD EXCISE TAX**

Last Update: 3/17/20

**WAC**

458-29A-100	Leasehold excise tax—Overview and definitions.
458-29A-200	Leasehold excise tax—Taxable rent and contract rent.
458-29A-400	Leasehold excise tax—Exemptions.
458-29A-500	Leasehold excise tax—Liability.
458-29A-600	Leasehold excise tax—Collection and administration.

**WAC 458-29A-100 Leasehold excise tax—Overview and definitions.**

(1) **Introduction.** Chapter 82.29A RCW establishes an excise tax on the act or privilege of occupying or using publicly owned real or personal property or property of a community center which is exempt from property tax through a leasehold interest. The intent of the law is to ensure that lessees of property owned by public entities bear their fair share of the cost of governmental services when the property is rented to someone who would be subject to property taxes if the lessee were the owner of the property. The tax is an excise tax triggered by the private use and possession of the public property or property of a community center which is exempt from property tax. RCW 82.29A.030.

(2) **Definitions.** For the purposes of chapter 458-29A WAC, the following definitions apply unless the context requires otherwise.

(a) "Department" means the department of revenue.

(b) "Community center which is exempt from property tax" means a community center as defined in RCW 84.36.010 (2)(a) that is exempt from property tax under RCW 84.36.010(1).

(c) "Concession" means the right to operate a business in an area of public property or property of a community center which is exempt from property tax.

(d) "Contract rent" means that portion of the payment made by a lessee (including a sublessee) to a lessor (or to a third party for the benefit of that lessor) for a leasehold interest in land and improvements or tangible personal property.

(e) "Franchise" means a right granted by a public entity or community center which is exempt from property tax to a person to do certain things that the person could not otherwise do. A franchise is distinguishable from a leasehold interest even when its exercise and value is inherently dependent upon the use and possession of publicly owned property or property of a community center which is exempt from property tax.

(f) "Improvement" means a modification to real property, resulting in an actual change in the nature of the property or an increase in the value of the property. It is distinguishable from routine repair and maintenance, which are activities resulting from normal wear and tear associated with the use of property, and which do not result in a change in the nature or value of the property itself. For example, replacing worn boards in a stairway is repair and maintenance; removing the stairway and replacing it with an elevator or a ramp is an improvement.

(g) "Leasehold interest" means an interest granting the right to possession and use of publicly owned real or personal property or real or personal property of a community center which is exempt from property tax as a result of any form of agreement, written or oral, without regard to whether the agreement is labeled a lease, license, or permit.

(i) Regardless of what term is used to label an agreement providing for the use and possession of public property or property of a community center which is exempt from property tax by a private party, it is necessary to look to the actual substantive arrangement between the parties in order to determine whether a leasehold interest has been created.

(ii) Both possession and use are required to create a leasehold interest, and the lessee must have some identifiable dominion and control over a defined area to satisfy the possession element. The defined area does not have to be specified in the agreement but can be determined by the practice of the parties. This requirement distinguishes a taxable leasehold interest from a mere franchise, license, or permit.

For example, Sam sells hot dogs from his own trailer at varying sites within a county fairgrounds during events. Sam is not assigned a particular place to set up his trailer nor does he store his trailer on the fairground between events. Sam's right to sell and his use of the property is considered a franchise and not a leasehold interest. The necessary element of possession, involving a greater degree of dominion and control over a more defined area, is lacking.

(iii) The use or occupancy of public property or property of a community center which is exempt from property tax where the purpose of such use or occupancy is to render services to the public owner or community center which is exempt from property tax does not create a leasehold interest. The lessee's possession and use of the property is in furtherance of the purposes of the public owner or community center which is exempt from property tax, and it is the public owner or community center which is exempt from property tax which benefits from the governmental services rendered in respect to the property.

For example, Contractor A operates a snack bar at a publicly owned facility where food and beverages are sold to members of the public, and derives a profit from the proceeds of the snack bar sales. Contractor B operates a cafeteria where food is provided at no charge to persons with appropriate I.D., and is reimbursed on a cost-plus basis. Contractor A is engaged in a business enterprise the same as any other restaurateur. Contractor A is using the public property for a private purpose, and has a taxable leasehold interest on the premises. Contractor B is merely providing a service to government personnel that the government agency would otherwise provide. Contractor B is using public property for a public purpose, and does not have a taxable leasehold interest.

(iv) "Leasehold interest" includes the use and occupancy by a private party of property that is owned in fee simple, held in trust, or controlled by a public corporation, commission, or authority created under RCW 35.21.730 or 35.21.660 if:

(A) The property is within a special review district established by ordinance after January 1, 1976; or

(B) The property is listed on, or is within a district listed on, any federal or state register of historical sites in existence after January 1, 1987.

(v) "Leasehold interest" does not include:

(A) Road or utility easements;

(B) Rights of access, occupancy, or use granted solely for the purpose of removing materials or products purchased from a public owner or community center which is exempt from property tax or the lessee of a public owner or community center which is exempt from property

tax, including permits to graze livestock, cut brush, pick wild mushrooms, or mine ore; and

(C) Any right to use personal property (excluding land or buildings) owned by the United States (as a trustee or otherwise), or by a foreign government, when the right to use the property is granted by a contract solely to manufacture or produce articles for sale to the United States or the foreign government.

(h) "Lessee" means a private person or entity with a leasehold interest in public property or property of a community center which is exempt from property tax which would be subject to property tax if the person or entity owned the property in fee.

(i) "Lessor" means an entity exempted from property tax obligations pursuant to Article 7, section 1 of the state Constitution or, for the property tax exempt period of forty years after acquisition, a community center as defined by RCW 84.36.010 (2)(a) that is exempt from property tax under RCW 84.36.010(1) that grants a leasehold interest in public property or property of a community center which is exempt from property tax to a private person or entity.

(j) "License" means permission to enter on land for some purpose, without conferring any rights to the land upon the person granted the permission. For example, a permit to enter federal lands to launch rafts into the water for the purpose of conducting whitewater river rafting tours is a license, not a leasehold interest.

(k) "Management agreement" means a written agency agreement between a public property owner or community center which is exempt from property tax and a private person or entity for the use and possession of public property or community center which is exempt from property tax under the following circumstances:

(i) The public property owner or community center which is exempt from property tax retains all liability for payment of business operating costs and business related damages (other than costs and damages attributable to the activities of the private party);

(ii) The public property owner or community center which is exempt from property tax has title and ownership of all receipts from sales of services or products relating to the management agreement (whether such amounts are collected by the private party on behalf of the public owner or community center which is exempt from property tax or whether the public owner or community center which is exempt from property tax permits the private party to retain a portion of the receipts as payment for services rendered by the private party), and the full discretion of whether to eliminate, reduce or expand the business activity conducted on the property; and

(iii) The public property owner or community center which is exempt from property tax has full control of the prices to be charged for the goods or services provided in the course of use of the property.

If each of these criteria is met, the arrangement between the parties is considered a "true" management agreement which does not, by itself, create a taxable leasehold interest in the property.

(l) "Permit" means a written document creating a license to enter land for a specific purpose.

(m) "Product lease" means a lease of public property or property of a community center which is exempt from property tax which will be used to produce agricultural or marine products (aquaculture) wherein the lease or agreement requires that:

(i) The leasehold payment be made by delivering a stated percentage of the agricultural or marine products to the credit of the lessor; or

(ii) The lessor be paid a stated percentage of the proceeds from the sale of the agricultural or marine products.

(n) "Public property" means all property owned by an entity exempted from property tax obligations pursuant to Article 7, section 1 of the state Constitution (and, in some instances, property held in trust by the United States).

(o) "Renegotiated" means a change in the leasehold agreement, other than one specifically required by the terms of the agreement itself, which alters:

(i) The agreed time of possession and use of the property;

(ii) The restrictions on the manner in which the property may be used; or

(iii) The rate of cash rental or other consideration paid by the lessee to or for the benefit of the lessor.

The term also includes the continued possession of the property by the lessee beyond the original date when, according to the terms of the agreement, the lessee had the right to vacate the premises without incurring further liability to the lessor.

(p) "Taxable rent" means the amount of rent upon which the measure of leasehold excise tax is based. It is either the contract rent or an amount established by the department in accordance with the procedures set forth in RCW 82.29A.020(2). (See also WAC 458-29A-200.)

(q) "Utility easement" means the right to use publicly owned land or land owned by a community center which is exempt from property tax for the purpose of providing access or installation of publicly regulated utilities.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 82.29A.140. WSR 10-18-034, § 458-29A-100, filed 8/25/10, effective 9/25/10; WSR 99-20-053, § 458-29A-100, filed 10/1/99, effective 11/1/99.]

**WAC 458-29A-200 Leasehold excise tax—Taxable rent and contract rent.** (1) **Introduction.** Ordinarily, the amount of taxable rent is the amount of contract rent paid by a lessee for a taxable leasehold interest. The law does authorize the department to establish a taxable rent different from the contract rent in certain cases. This rule explains the exclusions of certain moneys and other property received by or on behalf of a lessor from the measure of contract rent. It also explains the conditions under which the department is authorized to establish a taxable rent different from the contract rent.

(2) **Contract rent exclusions.** Even when a leasehold interest is present, not all payments made to a lessor constitute taxable contract rent. For example, payments made to or on behalf of the lessor for actual utility charges, janitorial services, security services, repairs and maintenance, and for special assessments such as stormwater impact fees attributable to the lessee's space or prorated among multiple lessees, are not included in the measure of contract rent, if the actual charges are separately stated and billed to the lessee(s). "Utility charges" means charges for services provided by a public service business subject to the public utility tax under chapter 82.16 RCW, and, for the purpose of this section only, also includes water, sewer, and garbage services and cable television services.

In some circumstances a private lessee that is occupying or using public property or property of a community center which is exempt from property tax may collect fees from third parties and remit them to the lessor. In those situations where:

(a) The fee structure, rate, or amount collected by the private party is established by or subject to the review and approval of the lessor or other public entity; and

(b) The amounts received by the private entity from third parties are remitted entirely to the public lessor or credited to the account of the lessor, those amounts are not considered part of the contract rent under this chapter, provided that nothing in this section shall preclude or prevent the imposition of tax, as appropriate, under any other chapter of Title 82 RCW on any amounts retained by or paid to the private entity as consideration for services provided to the public property owner or the community center which is exempt from property tax.

Notwithstanding the provisions of this subsection, if such deductions are determined by the department to reduce the amount of contract rent to a level below market value, the department may establish a taxable rent in accordance with subsection (6) of this section.

For example, Dan leases retail space in a building owned by the Port of Whistler. He pays \$800 per month for the space, which includes building security services. Additionally, he is assessed monthly for his pro rata share of actual janitorial and utility services provided by the Port. The Port determines Dan's share of these charges in the following manner: The average annual amount actually paid by the Port for utilities in the prior year is divided by 12. Dan's space within the building is approximately ten percent of the total space in the building, so the averaged monthly charge is multiplied by .10 (Dan's pro rata share based upon the amount of space he leases), and that amount is added to Dan's monthly statement as a line item charge for utilities, separate from the lease payment. The charges for janitorial services are treated in the same manner. In this case, Dan's payment for utilities and janitorial services are not included in the measure of contract rent. His payments for security services are included in the measure of contract rent, and subject to the leasehold excise tax, because they are not calculated and charged separately from the lease payments.

Contract rent also does not include:

(a) Expenditures made by the lessee for which the lease agreement requires the lessor to reimburse the lessee;

(b) Expenditures made by the lessee for improvements and protection if the lease or agreement requires the improved property to be open to the general public (e.g., a public boat launch) and prohibits the lessee from enjoying any profit directly from the lease;

(c) Expenditures made by the lessee to replace or repair the facilities due to fire or other catastrophic event including, but not necessarily limited to, payments:

(i) For insurance to reimburse losses;

(ii) To a public or private entity to protect the property from damage or loss; or

(iii) To a public or private entity for alterations or additions made necessary by an action of government which occurred after the date the lease agreement was executed.

(d) Improvements added to public property or property of a community center which is exempt from property tax if the improvements are taxed as any person's personal property.

(3) **Combined payments.** When the payment for a leasehold interest is made in combination with payment for concession, franchise or other rights granted by the lessor, only that part of the payment which represents consideration for the leasehold interest is considered part of the contract rent. For example, if the payment made by the lessee to the lessor exceeds the fair market rental value for comparable property with similar use, the excess is generally attributable to payment for a concession or other right.

(4) **Lease payments based on a percentage of sales.** The measure of contract rent subject to the leasehold excise tax may be based upon a lease which provides that the rent shall be a percentage of business proceeds. The manner in which the rent is calculated does not, in itself, determine the character of the underlying right or interest for which the payment is made.

(5) **Expenditures for improvements.** Expenditures by the lessee for nonexcludable improvements (see WAC 458-29A-200(2)) with a useful life of more than one year will be treated as prepaid contract rent if the expenditures were intended by the parties to be included as part of the contract rent. Such intention may be demonstrated by a contract provision granting ownership or possession and use to the public owner of the underlying property or the community center which is exempt from property tax that owns the underlying property and/or by the conduct of the parties. These expenditures should be prorated over the useful life of the improvement, or over the remaining term of the lease or agreement if the useful life of the improvement exceeds that term. If the lessee vacates prior to the end of the lease without the agreement of the lessor, thereby defaulting on the lease, no additional LET is due for the term remaining pursuant to the contract between the lessor and that lessee.

(6) **Department's authority to establish taxable rent.** RCW 82.29A.020(2) authorizes the department to establish a "taxable rent" that is different from contract rent in some situations.

(a) If the department determines that a lessee has a leasehold interest in publicly owned property or property of a community center which is exempt from property tax and that such leasehold interest has not been established through competitive bidding, or negotiated in accordance with statutory requirements regarding the rent payable, or negotiated under circumstances, established by public record, clearly showing that the contract rent was the maximum attainable by the lessor, the department may establish a taxable rent computation for use in determining the tax payable under authority granted under chapter 82.29A RCW. The department shall base its computation on the following criteria:

(i) Consideration shall be given to rent being paid to other lessors by lessees of similar property for similar purposes over similar periods of time; or

(ii) Consideration shall be given to what would be considered a fair rate of return on the market value of the property leased less reasonable deductions for any restrictions on use, special operating requirements or provisions for concurrent use by the lessor, another person or the general public.

(b) If the department establishes taxable rent pursuant to RCW 82.29A.020(2), and the contract rent was established in accordance with the procedures set forth in that section, but the lease is ten or more years old and has not been renegotiated, the taxable rent for leasehold excise tax purposes shall be prospective only. However, if upon examination the department determines that the contract rent was

not set in accordance with the statutory provisions of RCW 82.29A.020(2) and the rent is below fair market rate, the department may (and in most instances, will) apply the taxable rental rate retroactively for purposes of determining the leasehold excise tax, subject to the provisions of RCW 82.32.050(3).

(c) The department will not establish taxable rent if one of the following four situations apply:

(i) The leasehold interest has been established or renegotiated through competitive bidding;

(ii) The rent was set or renegotiated according to statutory requirements;

(iii) Public records demonstrate that the rent was the maximum attainable; or

(iv) A lease properly established or renegotiated in compliance with (6)(c)(i), (ii), or (iii) has been in effect for ten years or less without renegotiation.

(d) Where the contract rent has been established in accordance with one of the first three criteria set forth above, and the lease agreement has not been in effect for ten years or more, or has been properly renegotiated within the past ten years, the taxable rent is deemed to be the stated contract rent.

(e) If land on the Hanford reservation is subleased to a private or public entity by the state of Washington, "taxable rent" means only the annual cash rental payment made by the sublessee to the state and specifically referred to as rent in the sublease agreement.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 82.29A.140. WSR 10-18-034, § 458-29A-200, filed 8/25/10, effective 9/25/10; WSR 99-20-053, § 458-29A-200, filed 10/1/99, effective 11/1/99.]

**WAC 458-29A-400 Leasehold excise tax—Exemptions. (1) Introduction.**

(a) This rule explains the exemptions from leasehold excise tax provided by RCW 82.29A.130, 82.29A.132, 82.29A.134, 82.29A.135, and 82.29A.136. To be exempt from the leasehold excise tax, the property subject to the leasehold interest must be used exclusively for the purposes for which the exemption is granted.

(b) This rule also explains the expiration date for new tax preferences for the leasehold excise tax pursuant to the language found at RCW 82.32.805.

(c) **Rule examples.** This rule includes a number of examples that identify a set of facts and then states a conclusion. The examples should be used only as a general guide. The department of revenue (department) will evaluate each case on its particular facts and circumstances and apply both this rule and other statutory and common law authority.

(2) **Definitions.** For purposes of this rule, the following definitions apply:

(a) "New tax preference" means a tax preference that initially takes effect after August 1, 2013, or a tax preference in effect as of August 1, 2013, that is expanded or extended after August 1, 2013, even if the expanding or extending legislative amendment includes any other changes to the tax preference.

(b) "Tax preference" has the same meaning as in RCW 43.136.021 with respect to any state tax administered by the department, except

does not include the Washington estate and transfer tax in chapter 83.100 RCW.

(3) **Operating properties of a public utility.**

(a) All leasehold interests that are part of the operating properties of a public utility are exempt from leasehold excise tax if the leasehold interest is assessed and taxed as part of the operating property of a public utility under chapter 84.12 RCW.

(b) **Example.** Assume ABC Railroad Company is a public utility. Tracks leased to ABC Railroad Company are exempt from leasehold excise tax because ABC Railroad Company is a public utility assessed and taxed under chapter 84.12 RCW and the tracks are part of the railroad's operating properties.

(4) **Student housing at public and nonprofit schools and colleges.**

(a) All leasehold interests in facilities owned or used by a school, college, or university which leasehold provides housing to students are exempt from leasehold excise tax if the student housing is exempt from property tax under RCW 84.36.010 and 84.36.050.

(b) **Example.** Assume State Public University leases a building to use as a dormitory for its students. The leasehold interest associated with this building is exempt from the leasehold excise tax. This is because the dormitory is used to house State Public University's students.

(5) **Subsidized housing.**

(a) All leasehold interests of subsidized housing are exempt from leasehold excise tax if the property is owned in fee simple by the United States, the state of Washington or any of its political subdivisions, and residents of the housing are subject to specific income qualification requirements.

(b) **Example.** Assume an apartment building and the property on which it is located is:

- Owned in fee simple by the state of Washington; and
- Used as subsidized housing for residents subject to income qualification requirements.

If the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development holds the leasehold interest on the property it is exempt from leasehold excise tax. This is because the property is owned in fee simple by the state of Washington, used for subsidized housing, and the residents are subject to income qualification requirements.

(6) **Nonprofit fair associations.**

(a) All leasehold interests used for fair purposes of a nonprofit fair association are exempt from leasehold excise tax if the fair association sponsors or conducts a fair or fairs supported by revenues collected under RCW 67.16.100 and allocated by the director of the department of agriculture. The property must be owned in fee simple by the United States, the state of Washington or any of its political subdivisions. However, if a nonprofit association subleases exempt property to a third party, the sublease is a taxable leasehold interest.

(b) **Example.** Assume a leasehold interest held by Local Nonprofit Fair Association is exempt from leasehold excise tax. Local Nonprofit Fair Association subleases some of the buildings on the fairgrounds to private parties for storage during the winter. These subleases are subject to the leasehold excise tax.

(7) **Public employee housing.**

(a) All leasehold interests in public property or property of a community center which is exempt from property tax used as a residence by an employee of the public owner or the owner of the community cen-



ter which is exempt from property tax are exempt from leasehold excise tax if the employee is required to live on the public property or community center which is exempt from property tax as a condition of his or her employment. The "condition of employment" requirement is met only when the employee is required to accept the lodging in order to enable the employee to properly perform the duties of his or her employment. However, the "condition of employment" requirement can be met even if the employer does not compel an employee to reside in a publicly owned residence or residence owned by a community center which is exempt from property tax.

(b) **Examples.**

(i) A park ranger employed by the National Park Service, an agency of the United States government, resides in a house furnished by the agency at a national park. The ranger is required to be on call twenty-four hours a day to respond to requests for assistance from park visitors staying at an adjacent overnight campground. The use of the house is exempt from leasehold excise tax because the lodging enables the ranger to properly perform her duties.

(ii) An employee of the Washington department of fish and wildlife resides in a house furnished by the agency at a fish hatchery although, under the terms of a collective bargaining agreement, the agency may not compel the employee to live in the residence as a condition of employment. In exchange for receiving use of the housing provided by the agency, the employee is required to perform additional duties, including regularly monitoring certain equipment at the hatchery during nights and on weekends and escorting public visitors on tours of the hatchery on weekends. The use of the house is exempt from leasehold excise tax because the lodging enables the employee to properly perform the duties of his employment. The use is exempt even though the employee would continue to be employed by the agency if the additional duties were not performed and even though state employees of an equal job classification are not required to perform the additional duties.

(iii) A professor employed by State University is given the choice of residing in university-owned campus housing free of charge or of residing elsewhere and receiving a cash allowance in addition to her regular salary. If she elects to reside in the campus housing free of charge, the value of the lodging furnished to the professor would be subject to leasehold excise tax because her residence on campus is not required for her to perform properly the duties of her employment.

(8) **Interests held by enrolled Indians.**

(a) Leasehold interests held by enrolled Indians are exempt from leasehold excise tax if the lands are owned or held by any Indian or Indian tribe, and the fee ownership of the land is vested in or held in trust by the United States, unless the leasehold interests are subleased to a lessee which would not qualify under chapter 82.29A RCW, RCW 84.36.451 and 84.40.175 and the tax on the lessee is not preempted due to the balancing test (see WAC 458-20-192).

(b) Any leasehold interest held by an enrolled Indian or a tribe, where the leasehold is located within the boundaries of an Indian reservation, on trust land, on Indian country, or is associated with the treaty fishery or some other treaty right, is not subject to leasehold excise tax.

(c) **Example.** Assume an enrolled member of the Puyallup Tribe leases port land at which the member keeps his or her boat, and the boat is used in a treaty fishery. The leasehold interest is exempt from the leasehold tax. For more information on excise tax issues re-

lated to enrolled Indians, see WAC 458-20-192 (Indians—Indian country).

**(9) Leases on Indian lands to non-Indians.**

(a) Leasehold interests held by non-Indians (not otherwise exempt from tax due to the application of the balancing test described in WAC 458-20-192) in any real property of any Indian or Indian tribe, band, or community that is held in trust by the United States or subject to a restriction against alienation imposed by the United States are exempt from leasehold excise tax if the amount of contract rent paid is greater than or equal to ninety percent of fair market rental value. In determining whether the contract rent of such lands meets the required level of ninety percent of market value, the department will use the same criteria used to establish taxable rent under RCW 82.29A.020 (2)(g) and WAC 458-29A-200.

(b) **Example.** Harry leases land held in trust by the United States for the Yakama Nation for the sum of \$900 per month. The fair market value for similar lands used for similar purposes is \$975 per month. The lease is exempt from the leasehold excise tax because Harry pays at least ninety percent of the fair market value for the qualified lands. For more information on the preemption analysis and other tax issues related to Indians, see WAC 458-20-192.

**(10) Annual taxable rent is less than two hundred fifty dollars.**

(a) Leasehold interests for which the taxable rent is less than \$250 per year are exempt from leasehold excise tax. For the purposes of this exemption, if the same lessee has a leasehold interest in two or more contiguous parcels of property owned by the same lessor, the taxable rent for each contiguous parcel will be combined and the combined taxable rent will determine whether the threshold established by this exemption has been met. To be considered contiguous, the parcels must be in closer proximity than merely within the boundaries of one piece of property. When determining the annual leasehold rent, the department will rely upon the actual substantive agreement between the parties. Rent payable pursuant to successive leases between the same parties for the same property within a twelve-month period will be combined to determine annual rent; however, a single lease for a period of less than one year will not be projected on an annual basis.

**(b) Examples.**

(i) The yacht club rents property from the Port of Bay City for its clubhouse and moorage. It also rents a parking stall for its commodore. The parking stall is separated from the clubhouse only by a common walkway. The parking stall lease is a part of the clubhouse lease because it is contiguous to the clubhouse, separated only by a necessary walkway.

(ii) Ace Flying Club rents hangars, tie downs, and ramps from the Port of Desert City. It has separate leases for several parcels. The hangars are separated from the tie down space by a row of other hangars, each of which is leased to a different party. Common ramps and roadways also separate the club's hangars from its tie-downs. The hangars, because they are adjacent to one another, create a single leasehold interest. The tie downs are a separate taxable leasehold interest because they are not contiguous with the hangars used by Ace Flying Club.

(iii) Grace leases a lot from the City of Flora, from which she sells crafts at different times throughout the year. She pays \$50 per month for the lot, and has a separate lease for each season during which she sells. She has one lease from May through September, and a

separate lease for the time between Thanksgiving and Christmas, which might run thirty to forty days, depending on the year. The leases will be combined for the purposes of determining the leasehold excise tax. They relate to the same piece of property, for the same activity by the same lessee, and occur within the same year.

(iv) Elizabeth owns a Christmas tree farm. Every year she rents a small lot from the Port of Capital City, adjacent to its airport, to sell Christmas trees. She pays \$125 to the port to rent the lot for 6 weeks. It is the only time during the year that she rents the lot. Her lease is exempt from the leasehold excise tax, because it does not exceed \$250 per year in taxable rent.

(11) **Leases for a continuous period of less than thirty days.** Leasehold interests that provide use and possession of public property or property of a community center which is exempt from property tax for a continuous period of less than thirty days are exempt from leasehold excise tax. In determining the duration of the lease, the department will rely upon the actual agreement and/or practice between the parties. If a single lessee is given successive leases or lease renewals of the same property, the arrangement is considered a continuous use and possession of the property by the same lessee. A leasehold interest does not give use and possession for a period of less than thirty days based solely on the fact that the lessor has reserved the right to use the property or to allow third parties to use the property on an occasional, temporary basis.

(12) **Month-to-month leases in residential units to be demolished or removed.**

(a) Leasehold interests in properties rented for residential purposes on a month-to-month basis pending destruction or removal for construction of a public highway or public building are exempt from the leasehold excise tax. Thus, if the state or other public entity has acquired private property for purposes of building or expanding a highway, or for the construction of public buildings at an airport, the capitol campus, or some other public facility, and the public entity rents the property for residential purposes on a month-to-month basis pending destruction or removal for construction, these leases do not create taxable leasehold interests. This exemption does not require evidence of imminent removal of the residential units; the term "pending" merely means "while awaiting." The exemption is based upon the purpose for which the public entity holds the units.

(b) **Example.** State University has obtained capital development funding for the construction of new campus buildings, and has purchased a block of residential property adjacent to campus for the sole purpose of expansion. Jim leases these houses from State University pursuant to a month-to-month rental agreement and rents them to students. Construction of the new buildings is not scheduled to begin for two years. Jim is not subject to the leasehold excise tax, because State University is holding the residential properties for the sole purpose of expanding its facilities, and Jim is leasing them pending their certain, if not imminent, destruction.

(13) **Public works contracts.**

(a) Leasehold interests in publicly owned real or personal property held by a contractor solely for the purpose of a public improvements contract or work to be executed under the public works statutes of Washington state or the United States are exempt from leasehold excise tax. To receive this exemption, the contracting parties must be the public owner of the property and the contractor that performs the work under the public works statutes.

(b) **Example.** Assume Tinker Construction is a contractor performing work to construct a second deck on the Nisqually Bridge pursuant to a public works contract between the state of Washington and Tinker Construction. During construction of the second deck on the Nisqually Bridge any leasehold interest in real or personal property created for Tinker Construction solely for the purpose of performing the work necessary under the terms of the contract is exempt from leasehold excise tax.

**(14) Correctional industries in state adult correctional facilities.**

(a) Leasehold interests for the use and possession of state adult correctional facilities for the operation of correctional industries under RCW 72.09.100 are exempt from leasehold excise tax.

**(b) Examples.**

(i) Assume ABC Retail Company, a for-profit corporation, operates and manages a business within a state prison under an agreement between it and the department of corrections. ABC Retail Company is exempt from leasehold excise tax for its use and possession of state property.

(ii) Assume ABC Charitable Society, a nonprofit organization, operates and manages a business within a state prison under an agreement between it and the department of corrections. ABC Charitable Society is exempt from leasehold excise tax for its use and possession of state property.

**(15) Camp facilities for persons with disabilities.**

(a) Leasehold interests in a camp facility are exempt from leasehold excise tax if the property is used to provide organized and supervised recreational activities for persons with disabilities of all ages, and for public recreational purposes, by a nonprofit organization, association, or corporation which would be exempt from property tax under RCW 84.36.030(1) if it owned the property.

(b) **Example.** Assume a county park with camping facilities is leased to Charity Campgrounds, a nonprofit charitable organization that allows the property to be used by the general public for recreational activities throughout the year and as a camp for disabled persons for two weeks during the summer. Charity Campgrounds is exempt from leasehold excise tax because the nonprofit allows the property to be used by the general public for recreational activities throughout the year, and to be used as a camp for disabled persons for two weeks during the summer.

**(16) Public or entertainment areas of certain baseball stadiums.**

(a) Leasehold interests in public or entertainment areas of a baseball stadium with natural turf and a retractable roof or canopy, located in a county with a population of over one million people, with a seating capacity of over forty thousand, and constructed on or after January 1, 1995, are exempt from leasehold excise tax.

(b) "Public or entertainment areas" for the purposes of this subsection include ticket sales areas, ramps and stairs, lobbies and concourses, parking areas, concession areas, restaurants, hospitality and stadium club areas, kitchens or other work areas primarily servicing other public areas, public rest rooms, press and media areas, control booths, broadcast and production areas, retail sales areas, museum and exhibit areas, scoreboards or other public displays, storage areas, loading, staging, and servicing areas, seating areas and suites, the playing field, and any other areas to which the public has access or that are used for the production of the entertainment event or other public usage, and any other personal property used for such purposes.

"Public or entertainment areas" does not include locker rooms or private offices used exclusively by the lessee.

(17) **Public or entertainment areas of certain football stadiums and exhibition centers.** Leasehold interests in the public or entertainment areas of an open-air stadium suitable for national football league football and for Olympic and world cup soccer, with adjacent exhibition facilities, parking facilities, and other ancillary facilities constructed on or after January 1, 1998, are exempt from leasehold excise tax. For the purpose of this subsection, the term "public and entertainment areas" has the same meaning as set forth in subsection (16) of this rule.

(18) **Public facilities districts.** All leasehold interests in public facilities districts, as provided in chapter 36.100 or 35.57 RCW are exempt from leasehold excise tax.

(19) **State route 16 corridor transportation systems.** All leasehold interests in the state route number 16 corridor transportation systems and facilities constructed and operated under chapter 47.46 RCW are exempt from leasehold excise tax. RCW 82.29A.132.

(20) **Sales/leasebacks by regional transit authorities.** All leasehold interests in property of a regional transit authority or public corporation created under RCW 81.112.320 under an agreement under RCW 81.112.300 are exempt from leasehold excise tax. RCW 82.29A.134.

(21) **Interests consisting of three thousand or more residential and recreational lots.** All leasehold interests consisting of three thousand or more residential and recreational lots that are or may be subleased for residential and recreational purposes are exempt from leasehold excise tax. Any combination of residential and recreational lots totaling at least three thousand satisfies the requirement of this exemption. RCW 82.29A.136.

(22) **Historic sites owned by the United States government or municipal corporations.** All leasehold interests in property listed on any federal or state register of historical sites are exempt from leasehold excise tax if the property is:

(a) Owned by the United States government or a municipal corporation; and

(b) Wholly contained within a designated national historic reserve under 16 U.S.C. Sec. 461.

(23) **Amphitheaters.**

(a) All leasehold interests in the public or entertainment areas of an amphitheater are exempt from leasehold excise tax if a private entity is responsible for one hundred percent of the cost of constructing the amphitheater which is not reimbursed by the public owner, both the public owner and the private lessee sponsor events at the facility on a regular basis, the lessee is responsible under the lease or agreement to operate and maintain the facility, and the amphitheater has a seating capacity of over seventeen thousand reserved and general admission seats and is in a county that had a population of over three hundred fifty thousand, but less than four hundred twenty-five thousand when the amphitheater first opened to the public.

(b) For the purposes of this subsection, "public or entertainment areas" include box offices or other ticket sales areas, entrance gates, ramps and stairs, lobbies and concourses, parking areas, concession areas, restaurants, hospitality areas, kitchens or other work areas primarily servicing other public or entertainment areas, public rest room areas, press and media areas, control booths, broadcast and production areas, retail sales areas, museum and exhibit areas, scoreboards or other public displays, storage areas, loading, staging, and

servicing areas, seating areas including lawn seating areas and suites, stages, and any other areas to which the public has access or which are used for the production of the entertainment event or other public usage, and any other personal property used for these purposes. "Public or entertainment areas" do not include office areas used pre-dominately by the lessee.

(24) **Military housing.**

(a) All leasehold interests in real property used for the placement of housing that consists of military housing units and ancillary supporting facilities are exempt from leasehold excise tax if the property is situated on land owned in fee by the United States, is used for the housing of military personnel and their families, and is a development project awarded under the military housing privatization initiative of 1996, 10 U.S.C. Sec. 2885, as existing on June 12, 2008.

(b) For the purposes of this subsection, "ancillary supporting facilities" means facilities related to military housing units, including facilities to provide or support elementary or secondary education, child care centers, day care centers, child development centers, tot lots, community centers, housing offices, dining facilities, unit offices, and other similar facilities for the support of military housing.

(25) **Community colleges and technical colleges.**

(a) All leasehold interests in facilities owned or used by a community college or technical college are exempt from leasehold excise tax if the leasehold interest provides:

(i) Food services for students, faculty, and staff;

(ii) The operation of a bookstore on campus; or

(iii) Maintenance, operational, or administrative services to the community college or technical college.

(b) Provisions of RCW 82.32.805 and 82.32.808 do not apply to the exemption specified in this subsection.

(26) **Anaerobic digesters.**

(a) Beginning July 1, 2018, all leasehold interests in buildings, machinery, equipment, and other personal property which are used primarily for the operation of an anaerobic digester, the land upon which this property is located, and land that is reasonably necessary in the operation of an anaerobic digester are exempt from leasehold taxes for a period of six years from the date on which the facility or the addition to the existing facility becomes operational.

(b) Claims for the exemption described in (a) of this subsection must be filed with the department on the form *Leasehold excise tax exemption to operate an anaerobic digester* available at <https://dor.wa.gov>. Once filed, the exemption is valid for six assessment years following the date on which the facility or the addition to the existing facility becomes operational and may not be renewed. The department must verify and approve claims as it determines to be justified and in accordance with this subsection. No claims may be filed after December 31, 2024.

(c) For the purposes of this subsection, "anaerobic digester" means a facility that processes organic material into biogas and digestate using microorganisms in a decomposition process within a closed, oxygen-free container as well as the equipment necessary to process biogas or digestate produced by an anaerobic digester into marketable coproducts including, but not limited to, biogas conditioning, compression, nutrient recovery, and electrical generation equipment. See RCW 82.08.900.

(27) **Exemption for public or entertainment areas of certain arenas.** Leasehold interests in the public or entertainment areas of an arena are exempt from the leasehold excise tax if the arena has seating capacity of more than two thousand, and is located on land owned by a city with a population over two hundred thousand within a county with a population of less than one million five hundred thousand. For the purpose of this subsection, the term "public or entertainment areas" has the same meaning as set forth in subsection (23) of this rule.

(28) **Expiration date for new tax preferences.**

(a) RCW 82.29A.025 incorporates the language found at RCW 82.32.805 establishing the expiration date of new tax preferences for the leasehold excise tax.

(i) Generally, every new tax preference expires on the first day of the calendar year that is subsequent to the calendar year that is ten years from the effective date of the tax preference.

(ii) A future legislative amendment that expands a tax preference does not extend the tax preference beyond the period provided in this subsection unless an extension is expressly and unambiguously stated in the legislative amendment.

(b) This subsection does not apply if legislation creating a new tax preference includes an expiration date for the new tax preference.

(c) This subsection does not apply to an existing tax preference that is amended to clarify an ambiguity or correct a technical inconsistency. Future enacted legislation intended to make such clarifications or corrections must explicitly indicate that intent.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 82.32.300 and 82.01.060(2). WSR 20-07-102, § 458-29A-400, filed 3/17/20, effective 4/17/20; WSR 19-02-057, § 458-29A-400, filed 12/27/18, effective 1/27/19. Statutory Authority: RCW 82.29A.140. WSR 18-09-040, § 458-29A-400, filed 4/12/18, effective 5/13/18. Statutory Authority: RCW 82.32.300, 82.01.060(2), 82.32.805, and 82.29A.025. WSR 15-04-103, § 458-29A-400, filed 2/3/15, effective 3/6/15. Statutory Authority: RCW 82.29A.140. WSR 10-18-034, § 458-29A-400, filed 8/25/10, effective 9/25/10. Statutory Authority: RCW 82.01.060 and 82.29A.140. WSR 10-07-039, § 458-29A-400, filed 3/10/10, effective 4/10/10. Statutory Authority: RCW 82.29A.140. WSR 05-23-092, § 458-29A-400, filed 11/16/05, effective 12/17/05; WSR 02-18-036, § 458-29A-400, filed 8/26/02, effective 9/26/02; WSR 99-20-053, § 458-29A-400, filed 10/1/99, effective 11/1/99.]

**WAC 458-29A-500 Leasehold excise tax—Liability.** (1) **Introduction.** The event triggering a leasehold excise tax liability is the use by a private person or entity of publicly owned, tax-exempt property or property of a community center which is exempt from property tax.

Where a lessee is also a tax-exempt government entity, the tax will apply against a private sublessee, even though no contractual arrangement exists between the sublessee and the lessor.

(2) **Lessor's responsibility to collect and remit tax.** The lessor is responsible for collecting and remitting the leasehold excise tax from its private lessees. If the lessor collects the leasehold excise tax but fails to remit it to the department, the lessor is liable for the tax.

(a) Where the lessor has attempted to collect the tax, but has received neither contract rent nor leasehold excise tax from the les-

see, the department will proceed directly against the lessee for payment of the tax and the lessee shall be solely liable for the tax, provided, the lessor notifies the department in writing when the lessor is unable to collect rent and/or taxes, and the amount of the leasehold excise tax arrearage is \$1000 or greater. If the lessor fails to notify the department, the department may, in its discretion, look to the lessor for payment of the tax.

(b) If, upon examining all of the facts and circumstances, the department determines that the lessor in good faith believed the lessee to be exempt from all or part of the leasehold excise tax, the department will look to the lessor for assistance in collection of the tax due, but will not hold the lessor personally liable for payment of such tax. To satisfy the requirement of "good faith" the lessor must have acted with reasonable diligence and prudence to determine whether the leasehold excise tax was due from the lessee.

(3) The following examples, while not exhaustive, illustrate some of the circumstances in which a lessor may or may not be held liable for the leasehold excise tax. These examples should be used only as a general guide. The status of each situation must be determined after a review of all of the facts and circumstances.

(a) Doug has been newly hired in the accounting department at City Port and is assigned the responsibility for its rental accounts. He is unaware of the leasehold excise tax laws and fails to bill new tenants for the leasehold excise tax. In this situation, City Port does not avoid possible liability for the tax. Accounting errors and lack of knowledge regarding City Port's responsibility to collect and remit the leasehold excise tax do not qualify as reasonable diligence and prudence.

(b) Sybil rents an apartment in a building owned by State University but she is not a student of the University and the building is not used for student housing. She pays \$900 per month in rent. The terms of the lease require her to give at least thirty days' notice of intent to vacate. In the month of March, she fails to pay her rent, and State University serves her with a notice to pay or quit the premises. On April 1, she sends a check to State University for \$2016 (two months' rent, plus leasehold excise tax). The bank does not honor the check, and Sybil abandons the premises in mid-April without notice. When State University discovers that she has left, it timely notifies the department of the unpaid rent and leasehold excise tax. State University has acted with reasonable prudence and diligence and will not be held liable for the unpaid leasehold excise tax. In serving Sybil with a notice to pay or quit when she first defaulted, State University attempted to mitigate the amount of rent and taxes which were unpaid, and it complied with all other requirements regarding its duty to report the arrearages to the department.

(c) Sonata City owns several houses on property which may be used in the future for office buildings, a fire station, or perhaps a park, depending on its future needs. The city leases the houses on six-month terms, mainly to students who attend the local college. Over the past four years that the city has rented the properties, it has not collected leasehold excise tax from the tenants, because city officials believed the property to be exempt since they planned someday to use the property for a public purpose. Following an audit, it is determined that there is no definite plan for destruction of the houses nor any funds allocated for construction of public buildings on the site. Further, the houses were not rented on a month-to-month basis. Therefore, leasehold excise tax is due. Most of the prior tenants have left the



area, and there is no convenient way for the city to collect the unpaid leasehold tax. Sonata City is liable for the tax because although its managers did not believe the tax was due, the lack of knowledge regarding the city's responsibility to collect and remit the leasehold excise tax does not qualify as reasonable diligence and prudence. Sonata City had a duty to make a good faith effort to determine its obligations under the applicable leasehold excise tax statutes and rules.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 82.29A.140. WSR 10-18-034, § 458-29A-500, filed 8/25/10, effective 9/25/10; WSR 99-20-053, § 458-29A-500, filed 10/1/99, effective 11/1/99.]

**WAC 458-29A-600 Leasehold excise tax—Collection and administration.** (1) **Introduction.** Leasehold excise tax is levied by the state under RCW 82.29A.030 and by counties and/or cities under RCW 82.29A.040. The administrative procedures contained in chapters 82.02 and 82.32 RCW apply to the administration and collection of the leasehold excise tax.

(2) **Tax imposed.** The rates at which leasehold excise tax is levied are contained in RCW 82.29A.030 and 82.29A.040. The department publishes documents containing the applicable rates, credits, and formulas. These documents are updated as necessary and are available upon request.

(3) **Separate listing requirement.** The amount of leasehold excise tax due must be listed separately from the amount of contract rent on any statement or other document provided to the lessee by the lessor. If the leasehold excise tax is not stated separately from the contract rent, it is assumed that the leasehold excise tax is not included in the amount stated as due.

(4) **Credits allowed against leasehold excise tax.** Because the leasehold excise tax is intended only to equalize treatment between private property owners and lessees of public entities, the amount of leasehold excise tax should not exceed the amount of property tax that would be due if the leased property was privately owned. Therefore, in calculating the taxes imposed under RCW 82.29A.030 and 82.29A.040, RCW 82.29A.120 authorizes the following credits:

(a) **Leasehold interests created after April 1, 1986, or situations where the department has established taxable rent.** Where a leasehold interest other than a product lease was created after April 1, 1986, or where the department has established taxable rent in accordance with RCW 82.29A.020 (2)(b), and the amount of leasehold excise tax due is greater than the amount of property tax that would be due if the property was privately owned by the lessee, without regard to any property tax exemption under RCW 84.36.381, a credit equal to the difference between the leasehold excise tax and the comparable property tax will be allowed. This credit expires at midnight, July 27, 2013.

If the property is subleased, any allowable credit must be passed on to the sublessee. Lessees and sublessees of residential property who would qualify for either a partial or total exemption from property tax under RCW 84.36.381 if they owned the property in fee are eligible for a corresponding reduction in the amount of leasehold excise tax due. The leasehold excise tax for the qualifying lessees or sublessees is reduced by the same percentage as the percentage reduction

in property that would result from the property tax exemption under RCW 84.36.381.

(b) **Product leases.** A credit of thirty-three percent of the total leasehold excise tax due is allowed for product leases.

(5) **When payment is due.** The leasehold excise taxes are due on the same date that the contract rent is due to the lessor. If the contract rent is paid to someone other than the lessor, the leasehold tax is due at the time the payment is made to that other person or entity. Any prepaid contract rent will be deemed to have been paid in the year due and not in the year in which it was actually paid if the prepayment is for more than one year's rent. If contract rent is prepaid, the leasehold tax payment may be prorated over the number of years for which the contract rent is prepaid. The prorated portion of the tax will be due in two installments per year, with no less than one-half due on or before May 31 and the second half due no later than November 30 of each year.

(6) **Collection and distribution of tax by the department.** The department collects and distributes the leasehold excise taxes authorized by RCW 82.29A.030 and 82.29A.040.

(a) **Taxes levied by the state.** All money received by the department from leasehold taxes levied under RCW 82.29A.030 is transmitted to the state treasurer for deposit in the general fund.

(b) **Taxes levied by counties and cities.** Prior to the effective date of the ordinance imposing a leasehold excise tax, the county or city imposing the tax must contract with the department for administration and collection services. The department may deduct a percentage, not to exceed two percent, of the taxes collected as reimbursement for administration and collection expenses. The department deposits the balance of the taxes collected in the local leasehold excise tax account with the state treasury, and the state treasurer bimonthly distributes those moneys to the counties and cities.

County treasurers must proportionately distribute the moneys they receive in the same manner they distribute moneys collected from property tax levies in accordance with RCW 84.56.230, provided that no moneys are to be distributed to the state or any city, and the pro rata calculation for proportionate distribution cannot include any levy rates by the state or any city.

(7) **Leasehold interests in federally owned land or federal trust land.** Lessees with a leasehold interest in federally owned lands or federal trust lands must report and remit the leasehold tax due directly to the department on an annual reporting basis.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 82.01.060 and 82.29A.140. WSR 14-14-034, § 458-29A-600, filed 6/24/14, effective 7/25/14. Statutory Authority: RCW 82.29A.140. WSR 99-20-053, § 458-29A-600, filed 10/1/99, effective 11/1/99.]