

WSR 20-07-102

PERMANENT RULES

DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE

[Filed March 17, 2020, 2:31 p.m., effective April 17, 2020]

Effective Date of Rule: Thirty-one days after filing.

Purpose: The department is amending WAC 458-29A-400 to reflect 2019 legislation that exempts certain leasehold interests in arenas with a seating capacity of more than two thousand from the leasehold excise tax.

Citation of Rules Affected by this Order: Amending WAC 458-29A-400.

Statutory Authority for Adoption: RCW 82.32.300 and 82.01.060(2).

Adopted under notice filed as WSR 19-21-141 on October 21, 2019.

Number of Sections Adopted in Order to Comply with Federal Statute: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0; Federal Rules or Standards: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0; or Recently Enacted State Statutes: New 0, Amended 1, Repealed 0.

Number of Sections Adopted at the Request of a Nongovernmental Entity: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0.

Number of Sections Adopted on the Agency's own Initiative: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0.

Number of Sections Adopted in Order to Clarify, Streamline, or Reform Agency Procedures: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0.

Number of Sections Adopted using Negotiated Rule Making: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0; Pilot Rule Making: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0; or Other Alternative Rule Making: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0.

Date Adopted: March 17, 2020.

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OTS-1805.1

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 19-02-057, filed 12/27/18, effective 1/27/19)

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 center 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 wild-life 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 related 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 gen-

eral 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 predominantly 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 justi-

fied 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 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.]