

**DRAFT RULES GOVERNING ACCESS TO UTILITY  
POLES, DUCTS, ~~AND CONDUITS~~, AND RIGHTS-OF-WAY**

480-54-010 Purpose, interpretation, and application

- (1) This chapter implements RCW Ch. 80.54 “Attachment to Transmission Facilities.”
- (2) The commission will consider Federal Communications Commission orders promulgating and interpreting its pole attachment rules and federal court decisions reviewing those rules and interpretations as persuasive authority in construing the provisions in this chapter.
- (3) The rules in this chapter apply to all owners, occupants, and requesters [as defined in this chapter](#) without regard to whether those entities are otherwise subject to commission jurisdiction.

480-54-020 Definitions

- (1) “Attachment” means any wire, cable, or antenna for the transmission of intelligence by telecommunications or television, including cable television, light waves, or other phenomena, or for the transmission of electricity for light, heat, or power, and any related device, apparatus, or auxiliary equipment, installed upon any pole or in any [telecommunications, electrical, cable television, or communications right-of-way](#), duct, conduit, manhole or handhole, or other similar facilities owned or controlled, in whole or in part, by one or more owners, where the installation has been made with the consent of the one or more owners consistent with these rules [in this chapter](#).
- (2) “Attachment agreement” means an agreement negotiated in good faith between an owner and a utility or licensee establishing the rates, terms, and conditions for attachments to the owner’s facilities.
- (3) “Carrying charge” means the costs the owner incurs to own and maintain poles, ducts, or conduits without regard to attachments, including the owner’s administrative, maintenance, and depreciation expenses, commission-authorized rate of return on investment, and applicable taxes. When used to calculate an attachment rate, the carrying charge may be expressed as a percentage of the net pole, duct, or conduit investment.
- (4) “Communications space” means the usable space on a pole below the communications workers safety zone and above the vertical space for meeting ground clearance requirements under the National Electrical Safety Code.
- (5) “Conduit” means a structure containing one or more ducts, usually placed in the ground, in which cables or wires may be installed.

- (6) “Duct” means a single enclosed raceway for conductors, cable, or wire.
- (7) “Facility” ~~or “Facilities”~~ means a one or more poles, ducts, conduits, manholes or handholes, right-of-way, or similar structures on or in which attachments can be made. “Facilities” refers to more than one facility.
- (8) “Inner duct” means a duct-like raceway smaller than a duct that is inserted into a duct so that the duct may carry multiple wires or cables.
- (9) “Licensee” means any person, firm, corporation, partnership, company, association, joint stock association, or cooperatively organized association, other than a utility, that is authorized to construct attachments upon, along, under, or across the public ways.
- (10) “Make-ready work” means engineering or construction activities necessary to make a pole, duct, conduit, right-of-way or other support equipment available for a new attachment, attachment modifications, or additional attachments. Such work may include rearrangement of existing attachments, installation of additional support for the utility pole, or creation of additional capacity, up to and including replacement of an existing pole with a taller pole.
- (11) “Net cost of a bare pole” means (a) the original investment in poles, including purchase price of poles and fixtures and excluding cross-arms and appurtenances, less depreciation reserve and deferred federal income taxes associated with the pole investment, divided by (b) the number of poles represented in the investment amount. When an owner owns poles jointly with another utility, the number of poles for purposes of calculating the net cost of a bare pole is the number of solely-owned poles plus the product of the number of the jointly-owned poles multiplied by the owner’s ownership percentage in those poles. In the unusual situation in which net pole investment is zero or negative, the owner may use gross figures with appropriate net adjustments.
- (12) “Occupant” means any utility or licensee with an attachment to an owner’s ~~facility~~pole, duct, or conduit that the owner has granted the utility or licensee the right to maintain.
- (13) “Occupied space” means that portion of the ~~facility~~pole, duct, or conduit used for attachment that is rendered unusable for any other attachment, which is presumed to be one foot on a pole and one half of a duct in a duct or conduit ~~if no inner duct or only a single duct is installed.~~
- (14) “Overlashing” means the tying of additional communications wires or cables to existing communications wires or cables attached to poles.
- (15) “Owner” means the utility ~~other than a commercial mobile radio service company~~ that owns or controls the facilities to or in which an occupant maintains, or a requester seeks to make, attachments.
- (16) “Pole” means an above-ground structure on which an owner maintains attachments, which is presumed to be 37.5 feet in height. When the owner is an electrical company as

defined in RCW 80.04.010, “pole” is limited to structures used to attach electric distribution lines.

- (17) “Requester” means a licensee or utility that applies to an owner to make attachments to or in the owner’s facilities and that has an agreement with the owner establishing the rates, terms, and conditions for attachments to the owner’s facilities.
- (18) “Right-of-way” is an owner’s legal right to construct, install, or maintain facilities or related equipment in or on grounds or property belonging to another person. For purposes of this chapter, “right-of-way” includes only such legal rights that permit the owner to allow third parties access to those rights.
- (19) “Unusable space” with respect to poles means the space on the pole below the usable space, including the amount required to set the depth of the pole. In the absence of measurements to the contrary, a pole is presumed to have 24 feet of unusable space.
- (2019) “Usable space,” with respect to poles, means the vertical space on a pole above the minimum grade level that can be used for the attachment of wires, cables, and associated equipment, and that includes space occupied by the owner. In the absence of measurements to the contrary, a pole is presumed to have 13.5 feet of useable space. With respect to conduit, “usable space” means capacity within a conduit that is available or that could, with reasonable effort and expense, be made available, for the purpose of installing wires, cable, and associated equipment for telecommunications or cable services, and that includes capacity occupied by the owner.
- (210) “Utility” means any electrical company or telecommunications company as defined in RCW 80.04.010, and does not include any entity cooperatively organized, or owned by federal, state, or local government, or a subdivision of state or local government.

480-54-030 Duty to provide access; make-ready work; timelines

- (1) An owner shall provide ~~requesters~~other utilities or licensees with nondiscriminatory access for attachments to or in any ~~facility~~pole, duct, or conduit the owner owns or controls, except that if the owner is an electrical company as defined in RCW 80.04.010, the owner is not obligated to provide access for attachment to its facilities by another electrical company. An owner may deny such access to specific facilities on a nondiscriminatory basis where there is insufficient capacity or for reasons of safety, reliability, and generally applicable engineering principles; provided that the owner may not deny access to a pole based on insufficient capacity if the requester is willing to compensate the owner for the costs to replace the existing pole with a taller pole or otherwise undertake make-ready work to increase the capacity of the pole to accommodate an additional attachment, including but not limited to using space- and cost-saving attachment techniques, such as boxing (installation of attachments on both sides of the pole at approximately the same height) or bracketing (installation of extension arms), to the extent that the owner uses, or allows occupants to use, such attachment techniques in the communications space.

- (2) All rates, terms, and conditions made, demanded, or received by any owner for any attachment by a licensee or by a utility must be fair, just, reasonable, and sufficient and must be included in an attachment agreement with the licensee or utility. Parties may mutually agree on terms for attachment to or in [facilities, poles, ducts, or conduits](#) that differ from those in this chapter. In the event of disputes submitted for commission resolution, any party advocating rates, terms, or conditions that vary from the rules in this chapter bears the burden to prove those rates, terms, or conditions are fair, just, reasonable, and sufficient.
- (3) Except for overlapping requests as described in subsection (11) below, a [requester, utility, or licensee](#) must submit a written application to an owner to request access to its facilities. The owner may recover from the requester the reasonable costs the owner actually and reasonably incurs to process the application, [including the costs of inspecting the facilities identified in the application and preparing a preliminary estimate for any necessary make-ready work, to the extent these costs are not, and would not ordinarily be, included in the accounts used to calculate the attachment rates in WAC 480-54-060](#). The owner may survey the facilities identified in the application and may recover from the requester the costs the owner actually and reasonably incurs to conduct that survey. [The owner must provide the requester with an estimate of those costs prior to conducting a survey](#). The owner must complete any such survey and respond in writing to requests for access to the facilities identified in the application within 45 days from the date the owner receives a complete application, except as otherwise provided in this section. A complete application is an application that provides the information necessary to enable the owner to identify and evaluate the facilities to or in which the requester seeks to attach.
- (4) If the owner denies the request in an application for access, in whole or in part, the owner's written response to the application must include an explanation of the reasons for the denial for each [facility, pole, duct, or conduit](#) to which the owner is denying access. Such a response must include all relevant information supporting the denial.
- (5) To the extent that it grants the access requested in an application, the owner's written response must inform the requester of the results of the review of the application. Within 14 days of providing its written response, the owner must provide an estimate of charges to perform all necessary make-ready work, including the costs of completing the estimate. Make-ready work costs are non-recurring costs that are not included in carrying charges and must be costs that the owner actually and reasonably incurs to provide the requester with access to the facility.
  - (a) The requester must accept or reject an estimate of charges to perform make-ready work within 30 days of receipt of the estimate. The owner may require the requester to pay all estimated charges to perform make-ready work as part of acceptance of the estimate or before the owner undertakes the make-ready work [subject to true-up to the reasonable costs the owner actually incurs to undertake the work](#).
  - (b) An owner may withdraw an outstanding estimate of charges to perform make-ready work any time after 30 days from the date the owner provides the estimate to the

requester if the requester has not accepted or rejected that estimate. An owner also may establish a date no later than 30 days from the date the owner provides the estimate to the requester after which the estimate expires without further action by the owner.

(6) For requests to attach to poles, the owner must determine the time period for completing the make-ready work and provide that information in a written notice to the requester and all known occupants with existing attachments on the poles that may be affected by the make-ready work. The owner and the requester must coordinate the make-ready work with any such occupants as necessary.

(a) For attachments in the communications space, the notice shall:

(i) Specify where and what make-ready work will be performed.

(ii) Set a date for completion of make-ready work that is no later than 60 days after the notice is sent. For good cause shown, the owner may extend completion of the make-ready work by an additional 15 days.

(iii) State that any occupant with an existing attachment may modify that attachment consistent with the specified make-ready work before the date set for completion of that work. Any occupant with an existing attachment that does not comply with ~~these rules or the occupant's attachment agreement with the owner~~ applicable safety requirements must modify that attachment to bring it into compliance before the date set for completion of the make-ready work. The occupant shall be responsible for all costs incurred to bring its attachment into compliance.

(iv) State that the owner may assert its right to 15 additional days to complete the make-ready work.

(v) State that if make-ready work is not completed by the completion date set by the owner (or 15 days later if the owner has asserted its right to 15 additional days), the owner and the requester may negotiate an extension of the completion date or the requester, after giving reasonable notice to the owner, may hire a contractor from the list of contractors the owner has authorized to work on its poles to complete the specified make-ready work within the communications space. If the owner does not maintain a list of authorized contractors, the requester may choose a contractor without the owner's authorization.

(vi) State the name, telephone number, and e-mail address of a person to contact for more information about the make-ready work.

(b) For wireless antennas or other attachments on poles in the space above the communications space, the notice shall:

(i) Specify where and what make-ready work will be performed.

(ii) Set a date for completion of make-ready work that is no later than 90 days after notice is sent. For good cause shown, the owner may extend completion of the make-ready work by an additional 15 days.

(iii) State that any occupant with an existing attachment may modify the attachment consistent with the specified make-ready work before the date set for completion of that work. Any occupant with an existing attachment that does not comply with ~~these rules or the occupant's attachment agreement with the owner~~ applicable safety requirements must modify that attachment to bring it into compliance before the date set for completion of the make-ready work. The occupant shall be responsible for all costs incurred to bring its attachment into compliance.

(iv) State that the owner may assert its right to 15 additional days to complete the make-ready work.

(v) State the name, telephone number, and e-mail address of a person to contact for more information about the make-ready work.

(7) For the purpose of compliance with the time periods in this section:

(a) The time periods apply to all requests for access to up to ~~3~~3400 poles or 0.5 percent of the owner's poles in Washington, whichever is less.

(b) An owner shall negotiate in good faith the time periods for all requests for access to more than ~~3~~3400 poles or 0.5 percent of the owner's poles in Washington, whichever is less.

(c) An owner may treat multiple requests from a single requester as one request when the requests are filed within the same 30 day period. The applicable time period for completing the optional survey or required make-ready work begins on the date of the last request the owner receives from the requester within the 30 day period.

(8) An owner may extend the time periods specified in this section under the following circumstances:

(a) For replacing existing poles to the extent that circumstances beyond the owner's control, including but not necessarily limited to local government permitting, landowner approval, or adverse weather conditions, require additional time to complete the work~~Before offering an estimate of charges if the parties have no agreement specifying the rates, terms, and conditions of attachment;~~ or

(b) During performance of make-ready work if the owner discovers unanticipated circumstances that reasonably require additional time to complete the work. Upon discovery of ~~such~~the circumstances in this subsection (8)(a) or (b), the owner must promptly notify, in writing, the requester and other affected occupants with existing attachments. The notice must include the reason for the extension and date by which the owner will complete the work. The owner may not extend completion of make-ready

work for a period any longer than reasonably necessary and shall undertake such work on a nondiscriminatory basis with the other work the owner undertakes on its facilities.

- (9) If the owner determines that a survey is necessary for responding to a request for attachment to poles and fails to complete a survey of the facilities specified in the application within the time periods established in this section, a requester seeking attachment in the communications space may negotiate an extension of the completion date with the owner or may hire a contractor from the list of contractors the owner has authorized to work on its poles to complete the survey. If the owner does not maintain a list of authorized contractors, the requester may choose a contractor without the owner's authorization.
- (10) If the owner does not complete any required make-ready work within the time periods established in this section, a requester seeking attachment in the communications space may negotiate an extension of the completion date with the owner or may hire a contractor from the list of contractors the owner has authorized to work on its poles to complete the make-ready within the communications space:
- (a) Immediately, if the owner declines to exercise~~has failed to assert~~ its right to perform any necessary make-ready work by notifying the requester that the owner will not undertake that work; or
- (b) After the end of the applicable time period authorized in this section if the owner has asserted its right to perform make-ready work and has failed to timely complete that work.

If the owner does not maintain a list of authorized contractors, the requester may choose a contractor without the owner's authorization.

- (11) An occupant need not submit an application to the owner if the occupant intends only to overlash additional communications wires or cables onto communications wires or cables it previously attached to poles with the owner's consent under the following circumstances:
- (a) The occupant must provide the owner with written notice 150 business days prior to undertaking the overlash~~written notice~~. The notice must identify no more than 1030 affected poles and describe the additional communications wires or, cables, ~~or other equipment~~ to be overlashed so that the owner can determine any impact of the overlash on the poles or other occupants' attachments. The notice period does not begin until the owner receives a complete written notice that~~The notice must~~ includes, ~~but not necessarily be limited to~~, the following information:
- (i) The size, weight per foot, and number of wires or, cables, ~~conductors, or other equipment~~ to be overlashed; and
- (ii) Maps of the proposed overlash route, including~~and~~ pole numbers, if available.

(b) ~~A single occupant may not submit more than five notices or identify more than a total of 100 poles for overlashing in any 10 business day period. An owner may treat multiple overlashing notices from a single occupant as one notice when the notices are filed within the same 10 day period.~~ The applicable time period for responding to multiple notices begins on the date of the last notice the owner receives from the occupant within the 10 business day period.

(c) The occupant may proceed with the overlashing described in the notice unless the owner provides a written response, within ~~10~~seven business days of receiving the occupant's notice, prohibiting the overlashing as proposed. The owner may recover from the requester the costs the owner actually and reasonably incurs to inspect the facilities identified in the notice and to prepare any written response. The occupant must correct any ~~pre-existing safety~~ violations ~~caused by~~ of required separation of its existing attachments ~~from other attachments or other requirements applicable to its existing attachments~~ before overlashing additional wires or, cables, ~~or equipment~~ on those attachments.

(d) The owner may refuse to permit the overlashing described in the notice only if, in the owner's reasonable judgment, the overlashing would have a significant adverse impact on the poles or other occupants' attachments. The refusal must describe the nature and extent of that impact, include all relevant information supporting the owner's determination, and identify the make-ready work that the owner has determined would be required prior to allowing the proposed overlashing. The parties must negotiate in good faith to resolve the issues raised in the owner's refusal.

(e) A utility's or licensee's wires or, cables, ~~or equipment~~ may not be overlashed on another occupant's attachments without the owner's consent and unless the utility or licensee has an attachment agreement with the owner that includes rates, terms, and conditions for overlashing on the attachments of other occupants.

#### 480-54-040 Contractors for survey and make-ready.

- (1) An owner ~~should~~shall make available and keep up-to-date a reasonably sufficient list of contractors it authorizes to perform surveys and make-ready work in the communications space on its poles in cases where the owner has failed to meet deadlines specified in WAC 480-54-030.
- (2) If a requester hires a contractor for purposes specified in WAC 480-54-030, the requester must choose a contractor included on the owner's list of authorized contractors. If the owner does not maintain such a list, the requester may choose a contractor without the owner's approval of that choice.
- (3) A requester that hires a contractor for survey or make-ready work must provide the owner with prior written notice identifying and providing the contact information for the contractor and must provide a reasonable opportunity for an owner representative to accompany and consult with the contractor and the requester.



- (4) Subject to commission review in a complaint proceeding, the consulting representative of an owner may make final determinations, on a nondiscriminatory basis, on the attachment capacity of any pole and on issues of safety, reliability, and generally applicable engineering principles.

480-54-050 Modification costs; notice; temporary stay.

- (1) The costs of modifying a ~~facility pole, duct, or conduit~~ to create capacity for additional attachment, including but not limited to replacement of a pole, shall be borne by the requester and all existing occupants and owner that directly benefit from the modification. Each such occupant or owner shall share the cost of the modification in proportion to the amount of new or additional usable space the occupant or owner occupies on or in the facility. An occupant or owner with an existing attachment to the modified facility shall be deemed to directly benefit from a modification if, within 60 days after receiving notification of such modification, that occupant or owner adds to its existing attachment or otherwise modifies ~~its that~~ attachment. An occupant or owner with an existing attachment shall not be deemed to directly benefit from replacement of a pole if the occupant or owner only transfers ~~its that same~~ attachment to the new pole.
- (2) The costs of modifying a ~~facility pole, duct, or conduit~~ to bring an existing attachment into compliance with ~~applicable these rules or an attachment agreement or to remedy a~~ safety ~~requirements violation created by that attachment~~ shall be borne by the occupant or owner that whose attachment is non-compliant or created the safety violation. Such costs include, but are not necessarily limited to, the costs incurred by the owner or other occupants to modify the facility or conforming attachments. An occupant with an existing conforming attachment to a ~~facility pole, duct, or conduit~~ shall not be required to bear any of the costs to rearrange or replace the occupant's attachment if such rearrangement or replacement is necessitated solely as a result of creating capacity for ~~a~~ requester's additional attachment or to accommodate modifications to the facility or another occupant's existing attachment made to bring that attachment into conformance with ~~applicable these rules or an attachment agreement or to remedy a~~ safety ~~requirements violation created by that attachment~~.
- (3) An owner shall provide an occupant with written notice prior to removal of, termination of service to, or modification of (other than routine maintenance or modification in response to emergencies) any facilities on or in which the occupant has attachments affected by such action. The owner must provide such notice as soon as practicable but no less than 60 days prior to taking the action described in the notice; provided that the owner may provide notice less than 60 days in advance if a governmental entity or landowner other than the owner requires the action described in the notice and did not notify the owner of that requirement more than 60 days in advance.
- (4) A utility or licensee may file with the commission and serve on the owner a "Petition for Temporary Stay" of utility action contained in a notice received pursuant to subsection (3) of this section within 20 days of receipt of such notice. The petition must be



$$\text{Maximum Rate Per Linear ft./m.} = \left[ \frac{1 \text{ Duct}}{\text{No. of Inner Ducts}} \right] \times \left[ \frac{\text{Net Conduit Investment}}{\text{System Duct Length (ft./m.)}} \right] \times \text{Carrying Charge Rate}$$

If no inner duct or only a single inner duct is installed, the fraction, “1 Duct divided by the No. of Inner Ducts” is presumed to be 1 / 2.

#### 480-54-070 Complaint

- (1) Whenever the commission shall find, after hearing had upon complaint by a licensee or by a utility, that the rates, terms, or conditions demanded, exacted, charged, or collected by any owner in connection with attachments to its facilities are not fair, just, and reasonable, or by an owner that the rates or charges are insufficient to yield a reasonable compensation for the attachment, the commission will determine the fair, just, reasonable, and sufficient rates, terms, and conditions thereafter to be observed and in force and fix the same by final order entered within 360 days after the filing of the complaint. The commission will enter an initial order resolving a complaint filed in conformance with this rule within six months of the date the complaint is filed. The commission may extend this deadline for good cause. In determining and fixing the rates, terms, and conditions, the commission will consider the interest of the customers of the licensee or utility, as well as the interest of the customers of the owner. Except as provided in this rule, the commission’s procedural rules, WAC chapter 480-07, govern complaints filed pursuant to this rule.
- (2) A utility or licensee may file a formal complaint pursuant to this rule if:
  - (a) An owner has denied access to its facilitiespoles, ducts, or conduits;
  - (b) An owner fails to negotiate in good faith the rates, terms, and conditions of an attachment agreement; or
  - (c) The utility or licensee disputes the rates, terms, or conditions in an attachment agreement, the owner’s performance under the agreement, or the owner’s obligations under the agreement or other applicable law.
- (3) An owner may file a formal complaint pursuant to this rule if:
  - (a) Another utility or licensee is unlawfully making or maintaining attachments to or in the owner’s facilitiespoles, ducts, or conduits;
  - (b) Another utility or licensee fails to negotiate in good faith the rates, terms, and conditions of an attachment agreement; or
  - (c) The owner disputes the rates, terms, or conditions in an attachment agreement, the occupant’s performance under the agreement, or the occupant’s obligations under the agreement or other applicable law.

(4) The execution of an attachment agreement does not preclude any challenge to the lawfulness or reasonableness of the rates, terms, or conditions in that agreement, provided that one of the following circumstances exists:

(a) The parties made good faith efforts to negotiate~~were aware of~~ the dispute at the time they executed the agreement and such challenge is brought within six months from the agreement execution date; or

(b) The party challenging the rate, term, or condition was reasonably unaware of the other party's interpretation of that rate, term, or condition when the agreement was executed.

~~Nothing in this section precludes an owner or occupant from bringing any other complaint that is otherwise authorized under applicable law.~~

(5) A complaint authorized under this section must contain the following:

(a) A statement, including specific facts, demonstrating that the complainant engaged or reasonably attempted to engage in good faith, executive-level negotiations to resolve the disputed issues raised in the complaint and that the parties failed to resolve those issues despite those efforts. Such negotiations must include the exchange of reasonably relevant information necessary to resolve the dispute, including but not limited to the information required to calculate rates in compliance with WAC 480-54-060.

(b) Identification of all actions, rates, terms, and conditions alleged to be unjust, unfair, unreasonable, insufficient, or otherwise contrary to applicable law;

(c) Sufficient data or other factual information and legal argument to support the allegations to the extent that the complainant possesses such factual information; and

(d) A copy of the attachment agreement, if any, between the parties.

(6) The commission will issue a notice of prehearing conference within five business days after the complaint is filed. The party complained against must answer the complaint within 10 business days from the date the commission serves the complaint. The answer must respond to each allegation in the complaint with sufficient data or other factual information and legal argument to support that response to the extent that the respondent possesses such factual information.

~~(7) Except as provided in WAC 480-54-030(2), a~~A licensee or utility has the burden to prove its right to attach to or in the owner's facilities, poles, ducts, or conduits and that any attachment requirement, term, or condition an owner imposes or seeks to impose that the licensee or utility challenges violates any provision of RCW Ch. 80.54, this Chapter, or other applicable law. ~~Except as provided in WAC 480-54-030(2), a~~An owner bears the burden to prove that the attachment rates it charges or proposes to charge are fair, just, reasonable, and sufficient or that the owner's denial of access to its facilities is lawful and reasonable.

- (87) If the commission determines that the rate, term, or condition complained of is not fair, just, reasonable, and sufficient, the commission may prescribe a rate, term, or condition that is fair, just, reasonable, and sufficient. The commission may require the inclusion of that rate, term, or condition in an attachment agreement and to the extent authorized by applicable law, may order a refund or payment of the difference between any rate the commission prescribes and the rate that was previously charged during the time the owner was charging the rate after the effective date of this rule.
- (98) If the commission determines that an owner~~access to a pole, duct, or conduit~~ has ~~been~~ unlawfully or unreasonably denied or delayed access to a facility, the commission may order the owner to provide access to that facility within a reasonable time frame and in accordance with fair, just, reasonable, and sufficient rates, terms, and conditions.
- (10) Nothing in this section precludes an owner or occupant from bringing any other complaint that is otherwise authorized under applicable law.