

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
NOTICE OF PENALTIES INCURRED AND DUE
FOR VIOLATIONS OF LAWS AND RULES

PENALTY ASSESSMENT: TE-161115
PENALTY AMOUNT: \$100

Fruit of the Vine Tours
1560 Dale Avenue
Benton City, WA 99320

The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (Commission) believes that you have committed violations of Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 480-30-221 Vehicle and Driver Safety Requirements, which requires charter and excursion carriers to comply with Title 49 CFR Part 395 – Hours of Service of Drivers.

Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 81.04.405 allows penalties of one hundred dollars for each violation of Title 49 CFR Part 395. In the case of an ongoing violation, every day's continuance is considered a separate and distinct violation.

In September 2016, Commission Motor Carrier Investigator Wayne Gilbert conducted a compliance review of Fruit of the Vine Tours and documented the following violations of critical regulations:

- **One violation (four occurrences) of CFR Part 395.8(a) – Failing to require driver to make record of duty status.** Fruit of the Vine Tours allowed its employee Jonathan Artz to operate a commercial motor vehicle four times within a 30-day period without making a record of duty status.

The Commission considered the following factors in determining the appropriate penalties for these violations:

1. **How serious or harmful the violation is to the public.** The violations noted are serious and potentially harmful to the public. Companies that fail to maintain driver hours-of-service records put the traveling public at risk. Driver fatigue is a major factor in traffic crashes and a potentially unrested driver presents serious safety concerns.
2. **Whether the violation is intentional.** Considerations include:
 - Whether the company ignored Commission staff's (Staff) previous technical assistance; and
 - Whether there is clear evidence through documentation or other means that shows the company knew of and failed to correct the violation.

In its February 2012 application for charter and excursion authority, the company acknowledged its responsibility to understand and comply with applicable motor carrier

safety rules. Staff provided technical assistance to the company in April 2012. The company knew, or should have known about these requirements.

3. **Whether the company self-reported the violation.** The company did not self-report these violations.
4. **Whether the company was cooperative and responsive.** Fruit of the Vine Tours was very cooperative and responsive.
5. **Whether the company promptly corrected the violations and remedied the impacts.** The company took immediate steps to correct these violations.
6. **The number of violations.** For a company this size, the number of critical violations noted is unremarkable.
7. **The number of customers affected.** Fruit of the Vine Tours is a small company and reported 3,630 miles travelled in 2015. A relatively small number of customers were potentially put at risk by these violations.
8. **The likelihood of recurrence.** The Commission does not know if the company is likely to repeat these violations, however the company has provided evidence of immediate steps taken to correct the violations and prevent future occurrences.
9. **The company's past performance regarding compliance, violations, and penalties.** Fruit of the Vine Tours has no history of previous compliance review, violations or penalties.
10. **The company's existing compliance program.** Fruit of the Vine Tours has no formal compliance program.
11. **The size of the company.** Fruit of the Vine Tours is a small company, operating one commercial vehicle with one driver. In 2015, the company reported \$15,620 in gross revenue, and 3,630 miles travelled.

The Commission's Enforcement Policy provides that some Commission requirements are so fundamental to safe operations that the Commission will issue mandatory penalties for each occurrence of a first-time violation.¹ Otherwise, the Commission generally will assess penalties per type of violation, rather than per occurrence, for other first-time violations of critical regulations that do not meet the criteria for mandatory penalties. The Commission will assess penalties for any repeat violations of critical regulations found in future compliance investigations, including for each occurrence of a repeat violation.

The Commission has considered these factors and determined that it should penalize Fruit of the Vine Tours \$100 for one violation (four occurrences) of WAC 480-30-221 Vehicle and Driver Safety Requirements, which adopts CFR Part 395, calculated as follows:

¹ Docket A-120061 – Enforcement Policy of the Washington Utilities & Transportation Commission – Section V.

- One violation (four occurrences) of CFR Part 395.8(a) – Failing to require driver to make a record of duty status. These are first-time, critical violations, and thus the Commission assesses a penalty of \$100 for one violation of this type.

This information, if proven at a hearing and not rebutted or explained, is sufficient to support the penalty assessment.

Your penalty is due and payable now. If you believe any or all of the violations did not occur, you may deny committing the violation(s) and contest the penalty assessment through evidence presented at a hearing or in writing. The Commission will grant a request for hearing only if material issues of law or fact concerning the violation(s) require consideration of evidence and resolution in a hearing. Any contest of the penalty assessment must include a written statement of the reasons supporting that contest. Failure to provide such a statement will result in denial of the contest.

If there is a reason for any or all of the violations that you believe should excuse you from the penalty, you may ask for mitigation (reduction) of this penalty through evidence presented at a hearing or in writing. The Commission will grant a request for hearing only if material issues of law or fact require consideration of evidence and resolution in a hearing. Any request for mitigation must include a written statement of the reasons supporting that request. Failure to provide such a statement will result in denial of the request. See RCW 81.04.405.

If you properly present your request for a hearing and the Commission grants that request, the Commission will review the evidence supporting your dispute of the violation(s) or application for mitigation in a Brief Adjudicative Proceeding before an administrative law judge. The administrative law judge will consider the evidence and will notify you of his or her decision.


You must act within 15 days after receiving this notice to do one of the following:

- Pay the amount due.
- Contest the occurrence of the violations.
- Request mitigation to contest the amount of the penalty.

Please indicate your selection on the enclosed form and send it to the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission, Post Office Box 47250, Olympia, Washington 98504-7250, **within FIFTEEN (15) days** after you receive this notice.

If you do not act within 15 days, the Commission may take additional enforcement action, including but not necessarily limited to suspending or revoking your certificate to provide regulated service, assessing additional penalties, or referring this matter to the Office of the Attorney General for collection.

DATED at Olympia, Washington, and effective October 10, 2016.


for GREGORY J. KOPTA
Administrative Law Judge

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
PENALTY ASSESSMENT TE-161115

PLEASE NOTE: You must complete and sign this document, and send it to the Commission within 15 days after you receive the penalty assessment. Use additional paper if needed.

I have read and understand RCW 9A.72.020 (printed below), which states that making false statements under oath is a class B felony. I am over the age of 18, am competent to testify to the matters set forth below and I have personal knowledge of those matters. I hereby make, under oath, the following statements.

1. **Payment of penalty.** I admit that the violation occurred and enclose \$ _____ in payment of the penalty.

2. **Contest the violation.** I believe that the alleged violation did not occur for the reasons I describe below:

a) I ask for a hearing to present evidence on the information I provide above to an administrative law judge for a decision

OR b) I ask for a Commission decision based solely on the information I provide above.

3. **Application for mitigation.** I admit the violation, but I believe that the penalty should be reduced for the reasons set out below:

a) I ask for a hearing to present evidence on the information I provide above to an administrative law judge for a decision

OR b) I ask for a Commission decision based solely on the information I provide above.

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of Washington that the foregoing, including information I have presented on any attachments, is true and correct.

Dated: _____ [month/day/year], at _____ [city, state]

Name of Respondent (company) – please print

Signature of Applicant

RCW 9A.72.020:

“Perjury in the first degree. (1) A person is guilty of perjury in the first degree if in any official proceeding he makes a materially false statement which he knows to be false under an oath required or authorized by law. (2) Knowledge of the materiality of the statement is not an element of this crime, and the actor’s mistaken belief that his statement was not material is not a defense to a prosecution under this section. (3) Perjury in the first degree is a class B felony.”