

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

**NOTICE OF PENALTIES INCURRED AND DUE
FOR VIOLATIONS OF LAWS AND RULES**

PENALTY ASSESSMENT: TG-171146

PENALTY AMOUNT: \$300

Torre Refuse & Recycling LLC
d/b/a Sunshine Disposal & Recycling
PO Box 13369
Spokane Valley, WA 99213

The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (Commission) believes that Torre Refuse & Recycling LLC d/b/a Sunshine Disposal & Recycling (Torre Refuse or Company) has committed violations of Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 480-70-201 Vehicle and Driver Safety Requirements, which adopts Title 49 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 396 – Inspection, Repair, and Maintenance.

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

In November 2017, Commission Motor Carrier Investigator Sandi Yeomans completed a routine safety investigation of Torre Refuse and documented the following violations:

- **Three violations of Title 49 CFR Part 396.5(b) – Leaking wheel (grease) seal.** Commission staff (Staff) discovered three Company vehicles with leaking wheel hub seals.¹

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. A leaking wheel seal can affect the integrity of the wheel and axle and reduce braking effectiveness, placing the traveling public at risk. A commercial motor vehicle operated in such a condition presents serious safety concerns.
2. **Whether the violation is intentional.** Considerations include:
 - Whether the Company ignored Staff's 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.

Staff conducted a routine safety investigation of the Company's records in September 2009, and inspected the Company's vehicles in June 2010. Staff noted no similar

¹ Fleet numbers 229, 286, and 322.

violations, and also provided technical assistance. 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.** Torre Refuse was cooperative and responsive throughout the entire scope of the investigation.
5. **Whether the company promptly corrected the violations and remedied the impacts.** The Company took immediate steps to correct the violations.
6. **The number of violations.** The number of violations is insignificant for a company the size of Torre Refuse.
7. **The number of customers affected.** The Company traveled 698,097 miles and reported \$11,422,760 in gross revenue for 2016. A significant number of customers, as well as members of the traveling public may have been affected by these safety violations.
8. **The likelihood of recurrence.** The Commission does not know if Torre Refuse is likely to repeat these safety violations, however, the Company was cooperative and responsive to Staff, and has taken the appropriate steps to correct the safety violations documented in the safety investigation.
9. **The company's past performance regarding compliance, violations, and penalties.** This is the Company's first routine safety investigation since 2010, and the first time the Commission has assessed penalties for transportation safety violations.
10. **The company's existing compliance program.** Torre Refuse has a formal compliance program under the supervision of its general manager.
11. **The size of the company.** Torre Refuse is a large company with 35 drivers and 58 commercial vehicles.

The Commission's enforcement policy provides that some requirements are so fundamental to safe operations that the Commission will issue mandatory penalties for each occurrence of a first-time violation.² The Commission generally will assess penalties per type of violation, rather than per occurrence, for first-time violations of those critical regulations that do not meet the requirements for mandatory penalties. The Commission will assess penalties for any equipment violation meeting the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's "out-of-service" criteria and also for repeat violations of critical regulations found in future compliance investigations, including each occurrence of a repeat violation.

² Docket A-120061 – Enforcement Policy of the Washington Utilities & Transportation Commission – Section V.

The Commission has considered these factors and determined that it should penalize Torre Refuse \$300 for violations of WAC 480-70-201 Vehicle and Driver Safety Requirements, calculated as follows:

- Three violations of Title 49 CFR Part 396.5(b) – Leaking wheel (grease) seal. These are first-time violations, but they are violations of fundamental safety requirements. The Commission assesses penalties at the statutory amount of \$100 per occurrence, for a total of \$300.

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 December 19, 2017.

/s/ Gregory J. Kopta
GREGORY J. KOPTA
Administrative Law Judge

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
PENALTY ASSESSMENT TG-171146

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 (if you do not include reasons supporting your contest here, your request will be denied):
 - 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 (if you do not include reasons supporting your application here, your request will be denied):
 - 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.”