

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

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

PENALTY ASSESSMENT: TE-190751

PENALTY AMOUNT: \$14,400

Seattle Travel Service, LLC
28116 10th Ave S.
Des Moines, WA 98198

The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (Commission) believes Seattle Travel Service, LLC (Seattle Travel or Company) violated Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 480-30-221, Vehicle and Driver Safety Requirements, which adopts Title 49 Code of Federal Regulations (49 CFR) Part 382 – Controlled Substance and Alcohol Use and Testing, 49 CFR Part 391 – Qualifications of Drivers, and 49 CFR Part 396 – Inspection, Repair, and Maintenance.

Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 81.04.405 allows penalties of \$100 for each violation. In the case of an ongoing violation, every day's continuance is considered a separate and distinct violation. RCW 81.04.530 allows penalties of \$1,500 for each carrier that conducts commercial motor vehicle operations without having a controlled substance and alcohol testing program.

On September 5, 2019, Commission Motor Carrier Investigator Wayne Gilbert completed a routine safety investigation of Seattle Travel and documented the following violations:

- **One violation of 49 CFR § 382.305 – Failing to implement a random controlled substance and/or an alcohol testing program.** Seattle Travel failed to implement a random controlled substance and alcohol testing program.
- **One hundred twenty-eight violations of 49 CFR § 391.45(b)(1) – Using a driver not medically examined and certified during the preceding 24 months.** The Company allowed drivers Yong Yang and Song Jian to drive without a valid medical certificate on 128 occasions between January 25 and July 22, 2019.
- **One hundred twenty violations of 49 CFR § 396.11(a) – Failing to require driver to prepare driver vehicle inspection report.** Seattle Travel failed to require its drivers to prepare a driver vehicle inspection report on 120 occasions.

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

1. **How serious or harmful the violations are to the public.** The violations noted are serious and potentially harmful to the public. Companies that: (1) fail to implement a random controlled substance and alcohol testing program, (2) use drivers without valid medical certificates, and (3) fail to require drivers to prepare driver vehicle inspection reports put the traveling public at risk. These violations present serious safety concerns.

2. **Whether the violations were 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.

On October 12, 2016, the Commission received the Company's application for charter and excursion service authority. In the application, Yue Huang, General Manager of Seattle Travel, acknowledged the Company's responsibility to understand and comply with applicable motor carrier safety regulations.

On November 21, 2016, Staff provided new entrant safety regulation training to Seattle Travel, and Yue Huang acknowledged receiving training related to 49 CFR § 382.305, 49 CFR § 391.45, and 49 CFR § 396.11.

The Company knew or should have known about these requirements.

3. **Whether the Company self-reported the violations.** Seattle Travel did not self-report these violations.
4. **Whether the Company was cooperative and responsive.** Seattle Travel was cooperative and made corrections throughout the safety investigation. The Company expressed a desire to come into compliance with safety regulations.
5. **Whether the Company promptly corrected the violations and remedied the impacts.** The Company corrected the violations prior to the conclusion of the safety investigation. Seattle Travel has implemented a random controlled substances and alcohol testing program, obtained medical certification for its drivers, and implemented driver vehicle inspection reports.
6. **The number of violations.** Staff identified 11 violation types with a total of 260 individual occurrences.
7. **The number of customers affected.** The Company employs six drivers and operates four commercial motor vehicles. Seattle Travel traveled 30,000 miles in 2018. These safety violations presented a significant public safety risk.
8. **The likelihood of recurrence.** Staff provided technical assistance with specific remedies to help the Company assess how well its safety management controls support safe operations and how to begin improving its safety performance. The Company was cooperative with Staff, and took immediate action to correct the violations. In light of these factors, Staff believes the likelihood of recurrence is low.
9. **The Company's past performance regarding compliance, violations, and penalties.** On June 21, 2017, Seattle Travel was penalized \$250 in Docket TE-170641 for failing to

file a complete annual report and pay regulatory fees by May 1, 2017. The Company has no history of penalties for safety violations.

10. **The Company's existing compliance program.** Yue Huang, General Manager of Seattle Travel, is responsible for the Company's safety compliance program.

11. **The size of the Company.** Seattle Travel currently operates four commercial motor vehicles and employs six drivers. The Company reported \$510,000 in gross revenue for 2018.

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 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, including each occurrence of a repeat violation.

The Commission has considered these factors and determined that it should penalize Seattle Travel \$14,400, calculated as follows:

- One violation of 49 CFR § 382.305 – Failing to implement a random controlled substance and/or an alcohol testing program. The Commission assesses a penalty of \$1,500 for this first-time acute violation.
- One hundred twenty-eight violations of 49 CFR § 391.45(b)(1) – Using a driver not medically examined and certified during the preceding 24 months. The Commission assesses a penalty of \$100 for each occurrence of this violation, for a total of \$12,800.
- One hundred twenty violations of 49 CFR § 396.11(a) – Failing to require driver to prepare driver vehicle inspection report. The Commission assesses a "per category" penalty of \$100 for this first-time violation.

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 through evidence presented at a hearing or in writing. Alternatively, 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 the 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 to contest the violation(s) or for mitigation of the penalty

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

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 violation(s).
- Admit the violations but request mitigation of the penalty amount.

Please indicate your selection on the enclosed form and submit it electronically through the Commission's web portal **within FIFTEEN (15) days** after you receive this notice. If you are unable to use the web portal, you may submit it via email to records@utc.wa.gov. If you are unable to submit the form electronically, you may send a paper copy to the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission, PO Box 47250, Olympia, Washington 98504-7250.

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 Lacey, Washington, and effective September 18, 2019.

/s/ Rayne Pearson
RAYNE PEARSON
Director, Administrative Law Division

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
PENALTY ASSESSMENT TE-190751

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 violations occurred and enclose \$14,400 in payment of the penalty.

2. **Contest the violation(s).** I believe that the alleged violation(s) 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 violations, 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