

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

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

PENALTY ASSESSMENT: TE-200819

PENALTY AMOUNT: \$100

Wine Tasting Shuttle, LLC
11527 Highway 99, Apt. B305
Everett, WA 98204

The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (Commission) believes Wine Tasting Shuttle, LLC, (Wine Tasting Shuttle 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 391 – Qualification of Drivers.

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.

On September 17, 2020, Commission Motor Carrier Investigator Edward Steiner completed a routine safety investigation of Wine Tasting Shuttle and documented the following violation:

- **One violation of 49 CFR § 391.51(a) – Failing to maintain driver qualification file on each driver employed.** The Company failed to maintain a driver qualification file on driver Ramon Mendez.

The Commission considered the following factors in determining the appropriate penalty for this violation:

1. **How serious or harmful the violation is to the public.** The violation noted is serious and potentially harmful to the public. Companies that fail to maintain driver qualification files put the traveling public at risk. This violation presents public safety concerns.
2. **Whether the violation was 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 January 19, 2018, the Commission received Wine Tasting Shuttle's application for charter and excursion authority. In the application, Ramon Mendez, owner of Wine Tasting Shuttle, acknowledged the Company's responsibility to understand and comply with applicable motor carrier safety regulations.

On February 16, 2018, Staff provided new entrant safety regulation training to Wine Tasting Shuttle, where Ramon Mendez acknowledged receiving training pertaining to 49 CFR § 391.51(a).

On June 11, 2020, Staff provided technical assistance to Wine Tasting Shuttle, where Ramon Mendez acknowledged receiving training pertaining to 49 CFR § 391.51(a).

On May 12, 2020, the Commission received the Company's application to reinstate its charter and excursion authority. In the application, Ramon Mendez acknowledged the Company's responsibility to understand and comply with applicable safety laws and regulations.

The Company knew or should have known about this requirement.

3. **Whether the Company self-reported the violation.** Wine Tasting Shuttle did not self-report this violation.
4. **Whether the Company was cooperative and responsive.** Wine Tasting Shuttle was cooperative throughout the investigation and expressed a desire to come into compliance.
5. **Whether the Company promptly corrected the violation and remedied the impacts.** The Company provided Staff with a letter stating it corrected the violation; however, the Company has not provided Staff with supporting evidence.
6. **The number of violations.** Staff identified five violation types with a total of five individual occurrences.
7. **The number of customers affected.** The Company employs one driver and operates one commercial motor vehicle. Wine Tasting Shuttle traveled 10,000 intrastate miles in 2019. This safety violation presents a 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 expressed a desire to come into compliance. In light of these factors, Staff believes that the likelihood of recurrence is low.
9. **The Company's past performance regarding compliance, violations, and penalties.** The Company has no history of violations or penalties with the Commission.
10. **The Company's existing compliance program.** Ramon Mendez is responsible for the Company's safety compliance program.
11. **The size of the Company.** Wine Tasting Shuttle currently operates one commercial motor vehicle and employs one driver. The Company reported \$30,032 in gross revenue for 2019.

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 Wine Tasting Shuttle \$100, calculated as follows:

- One violation of 49 CFR § 391.51(a) – Failing to maintain driver qualification file on each driver employed. The Commission assesses a penalty of \$100 for this 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 the violation did not occur, you may deny committing the violation and contest the penalty through evidence presented at a hearing or in writing. Alternatively, if there is a reason for the violation 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 or for mitigation of the penalty 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 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 their 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.
- Admit the violation 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

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

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 permit 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 30, 2020.

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

WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
PENALTY ASSESSMENT TE-200819

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 \$100 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