

RCW 19.118.090 Request for arbitration—Eligibility—

Manufacturer's response—Defenses—Remedies—Acceptance or appeal. (1)

A consumer may request arbitration under this chapter by submitting the request to the attorney general. Within ten days after receipt of an arbitration request, the attorney general shall make a reasonable determination of the cause of the request for arbitration and provide necessary information to the consumer regarding the consumer's rights and remedies under this chapter. The attorney general shall accept a request for arbitration, except where it clearly appears from the materials submitted by the consumer that the dispute is not eligible because it is lacking a statement of a claim, incomplete, untimely, frivolous, fraudulent, filed in bad faith, res judicata, or beyond the authority established in this chapter. A dispute found to be ineligible for arbitration because it lacks a statement of a claim or is incomplete may be reconsidered by the attorney general upon the submission of other information or documents regarding the dispute.

(2) After a dispute is accepted, the attorney general shall assign the dispute to the board. From the date the consumer's request for arbitration is assigned by the attorney general, the board shall have forty-five calendar days to have an arbitrator hear the dispute and sixty days for the board to submit a decision to the attorney general. If the board determines that additional information is necessary to make a fair and reasoned decision, the arbitrator may continue the arbitration proceeding on a subsequent date within ten calendar days of the initial hearing. The board may require a party to submit additional information or request that the attorney general issue a subpoena to a nonparty for documents and records for a continued hearing.

(3) Manufacturers shall submit to arbitration if such arbitration is requested by the consumer within thirty months from the date of the original delivery of the new motor vehicle to a consumer at retail and if the consumer's dispute is accepted for arbitration by the attorney general. In the case of a motor home, the thirty-month period will be extended by the amount of time it takes the motor home manufacturers to complete the final repair attempt at the designated repair facility as provided for in RCW 19.118.041(3)(b).

(4) The manufacturer shall complete a written manufacturer response to the consumer's request for arbitration. The manufacturer shall provide a response to the consumer and the attorney general within ten calendar days from the date of the manufacturer's receipt of notice of the attorney general's assignment of a dispute for arbitration. The manufacturer response shall include all issues and affirmative defenses related to the nonconformities identified in the consumer's request for arbitration that the manufacturer intends to raise at the arbitration hearing.

(5) It is an affirmative defense to any claim under this chapter that: (a) The alleged nonconformity does not substantially impair the use, value, or safety of the new motor vehicle; or (b) the alleged nonconformity is the result of abuse, neglect, or unauthorized modifications or alterations of the new motor vehicle.

(6) The arbitration decision must contain a written finding of whether the new motor vehicle should be repurchased or replaced pursuant to the standards set forth under this chapter.

(a) The board shall award the remedies under this chapter if a finding is made pursuant to RCW 19.118.041 that one or more nonconformities have been subject to a reasonable number of attempts.

(b) If the board awards remedies under this chapter after a finding is made pursuant to RCW 19.118.041 that one or more nonconformities have been subject to a reasonable number of attempts, the board shall award reasonable costs and attorneys' fees incurred by the consumer where the manufacturer has been directly represented by counsel: (i) In dealings with the consumer in response to a request to repurchase or replace under RCW 19.118.041; (ii) in settlement negotiations; (iii) in preparation of the manufacturer's statement; or (iv) at an arbitration hearing or other arbitration proceeding. In the case of an arbitration involving a motor home, the board may allocate liability among the motor home manufacturers.

(c) The decision of the board shall be submitted to the attorney general who shall deliver it by certified mail, electronic mail confirmed by an electronic notice of delivery status or similar confirmation, or personal service to the consumer and the manufacturer.

(7) The consumer may accept or reject the arbitration board decision. Upon acceptance by the consumer, the arbitration board decision shall become final. The consumer shall send written notification of acceptance or rejection to the attorney general within sixty days of receiving the decision and the attorney general shall immediately deliver a copy of the consumer's acceptance to the manufacturer by certified mail, return receipt requested, electronic mail confirmed by an electronic notice of delivery status or similar confirmation, or by personal service. Failure of the consumer to respond to the attorney general within sixty calendar days of receiving the decision shall be considered a rejection of the decision by the consumer.

(8) Where a consumer rejects an arbitration decision, the consumer may appeal to superior court pursuant to RCW 19.118.100. The consumer shall have one hundred twenty calendar days from the date of rejection to file a petition of appeal in superior court. At the time the petition of appeal is filed, the consumer shall deliver, by certified mail or personal service, a conformed copy of such petition to the attorney general.

(9) Upon receipt of the consumer's acceptance, the manufacturer shall have forty calendar days to comply with the arbitration board decision or thirty calendar days to file a petition of appeal in superior court. At the time the petition of appeal is filed, the manufacturer shall deliver, by certified mail or personal service, a conformed copy of such petition to the attorney general. If the attorney general receives no notice of petition of appeal after forty calendar days, the attorney general shall contact the consumer to verify compliance. [2009 c 351 § 6; 1998 c 298 § 6; 1995 c 254 § 6; 1989 c 347 § 5; 1987 c 344 § 7.]

Application—2009 c 351: See note following RCW 19.118.021.

Severability—1998 c 298: See note following RCW 19.118.021.

Effective date—Severability—1995 c 254: See notes following RCW 19.118.021.