

RCW 49.44.230 Searches of employee personal vehicles. (1)

Except as provided in subsection (2) of this section:

(a) An employer or an employer's agent may not search the privately owned vehicles of employees located on the employer's parking lots or garages or located on the access road to the employer's parking lots or garages.

(b) An employee may possess any of the employee's private property within the employee's vehicle, unless possession of such property is otherwise prohibited by law.

(c) An employer must not require, as a condition of employment, that an employee or prospective employee waive the protections of (a) or (b) of this subsection.

(2) This section does not apply:

(a) To vehicles owned or leased by an employer;

(b) To lawful searches by law enforcement officers;

(c) When the employer requires or authorizes the employee to use the employee's personal vehicle for work-related activities and the employer needs to inspect the vehicle to ensure the vehicle is suited to conduct the work-related activities;

(d) When a reasonable person would believe that accessing vehicles of an employee is necessary to prevent an immediate threat to human health, life, or safety;

(e) When an employee consents to a search of his or her privately owned vehicle by the business owner, owner's agent, or a licensed private security guard based on probable cause that the employee unlawfully possesses: (i) Employer property; or (ii) a controlled substance in violation of both federal law and the employer's written policy prohibiting drug use. The employee's consent must be given immediately prior to the search, and the employer may not require that the employee waive consent as a condition of employment. Upon consent, the employee has the right to select a witness to be present for the search;

(f) To security inspections of vehicles on state and federal military installations and facilities;

(g) To vehicles located on the premises of a state correctional institution, as defined in RCW 9.94.049; or

(h) To specific employer areas subject to searches under state or federal law.

(3) For purposes of this section, the terms "probable cause" and "private property" have their usual meaning under state and federal law.

(4) An employer may not take any adverse action against an employee for exercising any right under this section. An adverse action means any action taken or threatened by an employer against an employee for exercising the employee's rights under this section, and may include, but are not limited to:

(a) Denying the use of, or delaying, wages or other amounts owed to the employee;

(b) Terminating, suspending, demoting, or denying a promotion;

(c) Reducing the number of work hours for which the employee is scheduled;

(d) Altering the employee's preexisting work schedule;

(e) Reducing the employee's rate of pay; and

(f) Threatening to take, or taking, action based upon the immigration status of an employee or an employee's family member.

[2023 c 252 s 1.]