

# Chapter 458-19 WAC

## PROPERTY TAX LEVIES, RATES, AND LIMITS

### WAC

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### DISPOSITION OF SECTIONS FORMERLY CODIFIED IN THIS CHAPTER

458-19-015	Assessor to determine one hundred six percent levy limit—Exceptions. [Statutory Authority: RCW 84.55-060 and 84.08.070. 94-07-066, § 458-19-015, filed 3/14/94, effective 4/14/94.] Repealed by 02-24-015, filed 11/25/02, effective 12/26/02. Statutory Authority: RCW 84.08.010, 84.08.070, 84.48.080, 84.55.060, 84.52.0502, chapters 84.52 and 84.55 RCW, and RCW 34.05.230(1).
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**WAC 458-19-005 Definitions.** (1) **Introduction.** This rule contains definitions of the terms used throughout chapters 84.52 and 84.55 RCW and chapter 458-19 WAC in the administration of the system used to levy property taxes on taxable property within the state of Washington.

(2) Unless the context clearly requires otherwise, the following definitions apply:

(a) "Annexation" means one taxing district is adding territory or another dissimilar taxing district from outside the annexing taxing district's boundary and includes a merger of a portion of a fire protection district under chapter 52.06 RCW with another fire protection district.

(b) "Assessed value" means the value of taxable property placed on the assessment rolls. The term is often abbreviated with the initials "A.V."

(c) "Certified property tax levy rate" means the tax rate calculated by the county assessor in accordance with law to produce the lawful amount of the certified property tax levy.

(d) "Consolidated levy rate" means:

(i) For purposes of the statutory aggregate dollar rate levy limit, the sum of all regular levy rates set for collection exclusive of rates set for the state levy, port and public utility districts, financing affordable housing for very low-income households under RCW 84.52.105, acquiring conservation futures under RCW 84.34.230, criminal justice purposes under RCW 84.52.135, emergency medical care or emergency medical services under RCW 84.52.069, county ferry districts under RCW 36.54.130, the portion of the fire protec-

tion levies protected under RCW 84.52.125, and the portion of metropolitan park district levies protected under RCW 84.52.120; and

(ii) For purposes of the constitutional one percent limit, the sum of all regular levy rates set for collection exclusive of rates set for port and public utility districts.

(e) "Consolidation" means the act of combining two or more similar taxing districts into one taxing district; for example, the combination of two fire protection districts into one fire protection district.

(f) "Constitutional one percent limit" means the levy limit established by Article VII, section 2 of the state Constitution, which prohibits the aggregate of all tax levies on real and personal property from exceeding one percent (\$10 per \$1,000) of the true and fair value of property. This limit does not apply to excess levies, levies by port districts, and levies by public utility districts. This limit is also set forth in RCW 84.52.050.

(g) "Department" means the department of revenue of the state of Washington.

(h) "Excess property tax levy" or "excess levy" means a voter-approved property tax levy by or for a taxing district, other than a port or public utility district, that is subject to neither the statutory aggregate dollar rate limit set forth in RCW 84.52.043 nor the constitutional one percent limit set forth in Article VII, section 2 of the state Constitution and in RCW 84.52.050. It does not include regular levies allowed to exceed the levy limit with voter approval.

(i) "Improvement" means any valuable change in or addition to real property, including the subdivision or segregation of parcels of real property or the merger of parcels of real property.

(j) "Inflation" means the percentage change in the implicit price deflator for personal consumption expenditures for the United States as published for the most recent twelve-month period by the Bureau of Economic Analysis of the Federal Department of Commerce in September of the year before the taxes are payable; see RCW 84.55.005.

(k) "Joint taxing district" means a taxing district that exists in two or more counties; the term does not include the state nor does it include an intercounty rural library district.

(l) "Junior taxing district" means a taxing district other than the state, a county, a county road district, a city, a town, a port district, or a public utility district.

(m) "Levy limit" means the statutorily established limit that prohibits a taxing district, other than the state, from levying regular property taxes for a particular year that exceed the limit factor multiplied by the highest amount of regular property taxes that could have been lawfully levied in the taxing district in any year since 1985, plus an additional dollar amount calculated by multiplying the increase during the current year of the assessed value in the taxing district due to new construction, improvements to property, and the increase

in the value of state assessed property by the levy rate of that district for the preceding year, or the last year the taxing district levied taxes.

(i) For purposes of the levy limit, the phrase "highest amount of regular property taxes that could have been lawfully levied" means the maximum amount that could have been levied by a taxing district under the limitation set forth in chapter 84.55 RCW unless the highest amount that could have been levied was actually restricted by the taxing district's statutory dollar rate limit. If the taxing district's levy was restricted by the statutory dollar rate limit, the highest amount that could have been lawfully levied is the amount produced by multiplying the assessed value of the taxing district by the statutory dollar rate.

(ii) The levy limit for the state is the limit factor multiplied by the highest amount of regular property taxes lawfully levied in the three most recent years, plus an additional dollar amount attributable to new construction, improvements to property, and any increase in the assessed value of state assessed property.

(n) "Levy rate" means the dollar amount per thousand dollars of assessed value applied to taxable property within a taxing district and is calculated by dividing the total amount of a statutorily authorized levy of a taxing district by the total assessed value of that district and is expressed in dollars and cents per thousand dollars of assessed value.

(o) "Limit factor" means:

(i) For taxing districts with a population of less than ten thousand in the calendar year immediately prior to the assessment, one hundred one percent;

(ii) For taxing districts having made a finding of substantial need in accordance with RCW 84.55.0101, the lesser of the substantial need factor or one hundred one percent; or

(iii) For all other taxing districts, including the state, the lesser of one hundred one percent or one hundred percent plus inflation.

(p) "New construction" means the construction or alteration of any property for which a building permit was issued, or should have been issued, under chapter 19.27, 19.27A, or 19.28 RCW or other laws providing for building permits, which results in an increase in the value of the property.

(q) "Regular property tax levy" or "regular levy" means a property tax levy by or for a taxing district that is subject to the statutory aggregate dollar rate limit set forth in RCW 84.52.043, the constitutional one percent limit set forth in RCW 84.52.050, or is a levy imposed by or for a port district or a public utility district.

(r) "Regular property taxes" means those taxes resulting from regular property tax levies.

(s) "Senior taxing district" means the state (for support of common schools), a county, a county road district, a city, or a town.

(t) "Statutory aggregate dollar rate limit" or "statutory aggregate limit" means the maximum aggregate regular property tax levy rate within a county established by law for senior and junior taxing districts, other than the state. See WAC 458-19-070 for the current limit.

(u) "Substantial need limit factor" means a limit factor approved by a taxing district's legislative authority that exceeds one hundred percent plus inflation. This limit cannot exceed one hundred one percent.

(v) "Statutory dollar rate limit" means the maximum regular property tax levy rate established by law for a particular class of taxing district.

(w) "Super majority" means a majority of at least three-fifths of the registered voters of a taxing district approving a proposition authorizing a levy, at which election the number of persons voting "yes" on the proposition constitutes three-fifths of a number equal to forty percent of the total votes cast in the taxing district in the last preceding general election; or by a majority of at least three-fifths of the registered voters of the taxing district voting on the proposition when the number of registered voters voting on the proposition exceeds forty percent of the total votes cast in the taxing district in the last preceding general election.

(x) "Tax code area" means a geographical area made up of a unique mix of one or more taxing districts, which is established for the purpose of properly calculating, collecting, and distributing taxes. Only one tax code area will have the same combination of taxing districts, with limited exceptions.

(y) "Taxing district" means the state and any county, city, town, port district, school district, road district, metropolitan park district, water-sewer district, or other municipal corporation, now or hereafter existing, having the power or legal authority to impose burdens upon property within the district on an ad valorem basis, for the purpose of obtaining revenue for public purposes, as distinguished from municipal corporations authorized to impose burdens, or for which burdens may be imposed for public purposes, upon property in proportion to the benefits accruing thereto.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 84.52.010, 84.52.043, and 84.52.0502. 06-02-008, § 458-19-005, filed 12/22/05, effective 1/22/06. Statutory Authority: RCW 84.08.010, 84.08.070, 84.48.080, 84.55.060, 84.52.0502, chapters 84.52 and 84.55 RCW, and RCW 34.05.230(1). 02-24-015, § 458-19-005, filed 11/25/02, effective 12/26/02. Statutory Authority: RCW 84.55.060 and 84.08.070. 94-07-066, § 458-19-005, filed 3/14/94, effective 4/14/94.]

**WAC 458-19-010 Levy limit and levy rate calculations. (1) Introduction.** This rule explains two of the basic steps in the levy setting process. First, who determines the levy limit for all taxing districts and second, who calculates the levy rate for the various taxing districts.

(2) **Who determines the levy limit?** The assessor generally determines the levy limit for all taxing districts levying regular property taxes. However, the levy limit for joint taxing districts, intercounty rural library districts, and the state is determined as follows:

(a) Joint taxing districts. The levy limit for joint taxing districts is determined by the assessor of the county in which the greatest amount of assessed value of the joint taxing district is located;

(b) Intercounty rural library districts. The levy limit for intercounty rural library districts is determined by the board of trustees of the intercounty rural library district in consultation with the assessors of the counties served by the district; and

(c) State levy. The levy limit for the state is determined by the department.

(3) **Who sets levy rates?** The assessor generally calculates the property tax levy rate necessary to collect the amount of taxes levied by or for each taxing district, within

the limitations provided by law. However, the levy rate for joint taxing districts and intercounty rural library districts is calculated as follows:

(a) Joint taxing districts. The assessor of the county in which the greatest amount of assessed value of the joint taxing district is located calculates the levy rate; and

(b) Intercounty rural library districts. The board of trustees of an intercounty rural library district calculates the levy rate for the intercounty rural library district in consultation with the assessors of the counties served by the district and certifies that rate to the respective county legislative authorities.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 84.08.010, 84.08.070, 84.48.080, 84.55.060, 84.52.0502, chapters 84.52 and 84.55 RCW, and RCW 34.05.230(1). 02-24-015, § 458-19-010, filed 11/25/02, effective 12/26/02. Statutory Authority: RCW 84.55.060 and 84.08.070. 94-07-066, § 458-19-010, filed 3/14/94, effective 4/14/94.]

**WAC 458-19-020 Levy limit—Method of calculation.**

(1) **Introduction.** This rule explains the general method used to calculate the levy limit for the state and all other taxing districts in accordance with RCW 84.55.010 and 84.55.092. Except for the state levy, the same method is generally used to calculate the amount of regular property taxes that can be levied by a taxing district in any year. This rule also describes what occurs when a taxing district makes a finding of substantial need in accordance with RCW 84.55.0101 to use a limit factor in excess of one hundred percent plus inflation. This rule does not attempt to include all special circumstances that may affect the applicable limit under chapter 84.55 RCW.

(2) **Increase in tax revenues - Ordinance or resolution required.** No taxing district, other than the state, may authorize an increase in property tax revenue, other than one resulting from an increase in assessed value of the district attributable to new construction, improvements to property, or any increase in state assessed property except by holding a public hearing and adopting an ordinance or resolution. The ordinance or resolution may cover a period of up to two years, but the ordinance or resolution must specifically state for each year the dollar increase and percentage change in the levy from the previous year. The dollar increase and percentage change should reflect everything included in the levy limit and should not reflect anything excluded under chapter 84.55 RCW (such as, but not limited to, a levy for property tax refunds paid under the provisions of chapter 84.68 or 84.69 RCW).

(a) A majority of the legislative authority of a taxing district must approve an ordinance or resolution authorizing an increase in the taxing district's levy as calculated in subsection (3) of this rule.

(b) Upon making a finding of substantial need to increase its levy by an amount greater than the rate of inflation, the legislative authority of a taxing district may adopt a second ordinance or resolution establishing a limit factor greater than one hundred percent plus inflation. But the substantial need limit factor can never exceed one hundred one percent.

(i) In districts with legislative authorities of four members or less, two-thirds of the members must approve an ordi-

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nance or resolution supporting a substantial need to increase the limit factor.

(ii) In districts with more than four members, a majority plus one must approve an ordinance or resolution supporting a substantial need to increase the limit factor.

(3) **Calculation of levy limit for all taxing districts other than the state.** The amount of regular property taxes that can be levied by a taxing district other than the state in any year is limited to an amount that will not exceed the amount resulting from the following calculation, except as otherwise provided by statute:

(a) The highest amount that could have been lawfully levied by the taxing district in any year since 1985 for 1986 collection, multiplied by the limit factor; plus

(b) A dollar component calculated by multiplying the increase in assessed value of the district from the previous year attributable to new construction, improvements to property, and any increase in the assessed value of state assessed property, by the actual regular property tax levy rate of that district for the preceding year, or the last year the taxing district levied taxes.

(4) **Calculation of levy limit for the state levy.** The levy limit for the state is calculated in the same manner as for other taxing districts except that the limit factor is multiplied by the highest amount that was lawfully levied by the state in the three most recent years in which such taxes were levied.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 84.08.010, 84.08.070, 84.48.080, 84.55.060, 84.52.0502, chapters 84.52 and 84.55 RCW, and RCW 34.05.230(1). 02-24-015, § 458-19-020, filed 11/25/02, effective 12/26/02. Statutory Authority: RCW 84.55.060 and 84.08.070. 94-07-066, § 458-19-020, filed 3/14/94, effective 4/14/94.]

**WAC 458-19-025 Restoration of regular levy. (1)**

**Introduction.** This rule explains how a taxing district restores a regular property tax levy if it has not levied since 1985 and it elects to restore a regular property tax levy in accordance with RCW 84.55.015.

(2) **Calculation of restored regular levy.** If a taxing district has not levied since 1985 and it elects to restore a regular property tax levy, the first regular property tax payable as a result of the restored levy cannot exceed the lesser of:

(a) The combination of the following:

(i) The amount last levied plus,

(ii) A dollar component calculated by multiplying the increase in assessed value of property in the district attributable to new construction and improvements to property since the last levy through the current year by the levy rate that is proposed to be restored. The levy rate that is proposed to be restored is determined by dividing the total dollar amount that was last levied by the district by the current year's assessed value after deducting the accumulated assessed value attributable to new construction and improvements to property since the last levy; or

(b) The maximum amount which could be lawfully levied by that district in the year the restored levy is proposed, subject to the statutory dollar rate limit contained in the taxing district's authorizing statute, without considering the calculation used in subsection (2)(a) of this rule.

(3) **Example.** Taxing district "A" has not levied a regular levy since 1985 when it levied \$10,000 based upon 1985 assessed values and all lawful limitations at that time. The

total increase since the 1985 assessment year in assessed value of property in the district as a result of new construction and improvements to property beginning in 1986 through the current assessment year is \$3,000,000. The assessed value of taxing district "A" for the current year is \$15,000,000. The calculation for (a) of this subsection is as follows:

Current year A.V. -	\$15,000,000
Minus increases in new construction and improvements to property since 1985 -	<u>- 3,000,000</u>
Amount levied in 1985 -	\$10,000
Current year A.V. less increases in new construction and improvements to property -	<u>+ \$12,000,000</u>
Levy rate proposed to be restored -	.000833
Increases in new construction and improvements to property -	<u>x \$3,000,000</u>
Calculated dollar amount -	\$2,500
Allowable 1985 levy -	<u>+ 10,000</u>
Allowable levy for current year (under (a)) -	\$12,500

The amount calculated under (a) of this subsection must be compared to the amount determined under (b) of this subsection and the lesser of the two amounts is the maximum amount that can be levied.

**(4) Assessor to maintain taxing district records.**

Records of value increases attributable to new construction and improvements to property, and increases in the value of state assessed property are to be maintained each year by the county assessor for each taxing district whether or not the district imposes a regular property tax levy.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 84.08.010, 84.08.070, 84.48.080, 84.55.060, 84.52.0502, chapters 84.52 and 84.55 RCW, and RCW 34.05.230(1), 02-24-015, § 458-19-025, filed 11/25/02, effective 12/26/02. Statutory Authority: RCW 84.55.060 and 84.08.070, 94-07-066, § 458-19-025, filed 3/14/94, effective 4/14/94.]

**WAC 458-19-030 Levy limit—Consolidation of districts. (1) Introduction.** This rule describes the method used to calculate the first levy for a taxing district created by the consolidation of similar taxing districts in accordance with RCW 84.55.020.

**(2) Calculation of the first levy of a consolidated taxing district.** The first regular property tax levy made by a taxing district, created by the consolidation of two or more similar taxing districts, cannot exceed:

(a) The sum of the product of the limit factor multiplied by the highest amount of regular property taxes lawfully levied by each of the component districts during the three most recent years in which taxes were levied; plus

(b) The sum of each of the amounts calculated by multiplying the increase in assessed value of property attributable to new construction and improvements to property in each of the component districts since the preceding year by the regular property tax rate of each component district in the preceding year.

**(3) Example.** Taxing district "A" and taxing district "B" consolidate, becoming one taxing district. The highest amount of regular property taxes lawfully levied by district "A" during the three most recent years is \$100,000. The highest amount of regular property taxes lawfully levied by district "B" during the three most recent years is \$150,000. The increase in assessed value due to new construction and improvements to property in district "A" since the year prior to consolidation was \$600,000. The increase in assessed value due to new construction and improvements to property

in district "B" since the year prior to consolidation was \$900,000. The regular property tax rate for district "A" in the year prior to consolidation was \$.50 per \$1,000 of assessed value. The regular property tax rate for district "B" in the year prior to consolidation was \$.45 per \$1,000 of assessed value. Assume the limit factor for this example is 101% because it is the lesser of one hundred one percent and one hundred percent plus the rate of inflation. The maximum amount of regular property taxes that can be levied in the year of consolidation, for taxes payable the following year, by the new consolidated taxing district is calculated as follows:

	Highest regular levy
District "A" -	\$100,000
District "B" -	<u>150,000</u>
Total -	\$250,000
	x 1.01 = \$252,500
Increases in assessed value multiplied by levy rate:	
District "A" -	\$600,000 x \$.50 ÷ \$1,000 = \$300
District "B" -	\$900,000 x \$.45 ÷ \$1,000 = <u>\$405</u>
	\$705

Maximum regular property taxes that can be levied in the year of consolidation, payable in the year following consolidation:

$$\$252,500 + \$705 = \$253,205$$

[Statutory Authority: RCW 84.08.010, 84.08.070, 84.48.080, 84.55.060, 84.52.0502, chapters 84.52 and 84.55 RCW, and RCW 34.05.230(1), 02-24-015, § 458-19-030, filed 11/25/02, effective 12/26/02. Statutory Authority: RCW 84.55.060 and 84.08.070, 94-07-066, § 458-19-030, filed 3/14/94, effective 4/14/94.]

**WAC 458-19-035 Levy limit—Annexation. (1) Introduction.** One taxing district may annex territory or another dissimilar taxing district from outside the annexing taxing district's boundary. This rule sets forth the method used to calculate the first regular property tax levy made after a taxing district has annexed territory or a dissimilar taxing district in accordance with RCW 84.55.030 and 84.55.110. This rule also explains what occurs when the department of natural resources (DNR) discontinues forest fire patrol assessments on parcels of forest land.

**(2) Increase in territory due to annexation.** The first regular property tax levy of a taxing district after it annexes territory or a dissimilar taxing district cannot exceed the amount calculated as follows:

(a) Multiply the highest amount of regular property taxes that could have been lawfully levied since 1985 for 1986 collection, of the annexing district as though no annexation had occurred, by the limit factor as defined in RCW 84.55.005 and WAC 458-19-005;

(b) Multiply the increase in assessed value in the annexing district since the preceding year attributable to new construction, improvements to property, and increase in assessed value of state assessed property by the regular property tax levy rate of the annexing district for the preceding year; and

(c) Multiply the current year assessed value of the annexed territory or district by the levy rate that would have been used for the current year by the annexing district had there been no annexation.

(d) Add together the result of each of the calculations set forth in subsection (2)(a), (b), and (c) of this rule to determine

the maximum amount of the first regular levy of a taxing district after annexation.

(3) **Example.** Following is an example of the calculations prescribed in subsection (2) of this rule. Taxing district "A" annexes a portion of taxing district "B" that takes effect before March 1st in 2002. The highest amount of regular property taxes that could have been levied by district "A" since 1985 for 1986 collection is \$100,000. The increase in assessed value from 2001 to 2002 in district "A" due to new construction, improvements to property, and increase in the value of state assessed property is \$700,000. The levy rate for district "A" for 2001 was \$.50 per \$1,000 of assessed value. The 2002 levy rate for district "A," had there been no annexation, would have been \$.48 per \$1,000 of assessed value. The 2002 assessed value of the portion of taxing district "B" that was annexed by taxing district "A" is \$5,000,000, which includes the value of new construction and improvements to property. Assume the levy limit for this example is 101% because it is the lesser of one hundred one percent and one hundred percent plus the rate of inflation. The first regular levy by taxing district "A" after annexation cannot exceed the amount calculated as follows:

District "A" highest levy since 1985 -	\$100,000
	<u>x 1.01</u>
	\$101,000
A.V. of new construction* in district "A" -	\$700,000
District "A" levy rate for 2001 -	<u>x .50</u>
	\$350,000
Divide by \$1,000 -	<u>÷ 1,000</u>
Levy amount for new construction -	\$350
2002 A.V. of annexed portion of district "B" -	\$5,000,000
District "A" levy rate that would have been used in 2002, absent annexation -	<u>x .48</u>
	\$2,400,000
Divide by \$1,000 -	<u>÷ 1,000</u>
Levy amount for annexed part of district "B" -	\$2,400
	\$101,000
	350
	<u>+ 2,400</u>
Maximum levy amount for district "A" after annexation -	\$103,750

\* For purposes of this example, "new construction" includes improvements to property and increases in the value of state assessed property.

(4) **Loss of territory due to annexation.** When a taxing district loses a portion of its territory as a result of annexation to another district, the levy limit for the taxing district that loses part of its territory is calculated by multiplying the highest amount that could have been lawfully levied by that taxing district since 1985 for 1986 collection by the limit factor as defined in RCW 84.55.005 and WAC 458-19-005. However, only the increase in assessed value from the preceding year, attributable to new construction, improvements to property, and increase in assessed value of state assessed property that is actually situated in the remaining territory of the taxing district is added to the amount thus determined, to calculate the levy limit. In no case, absent voter approval of an excess

levy, can the levy rate exceed the statutory dollar rate limit for that class of taxing district.

(5) **Forest fire patrol protection assessments discontinued by DNR - Effect.** If an owner of forest land within a forest protection zone neglects or fails to provide adequate fire protection as required by RCW 76.04.600, DNR will provide this protection and impose an annual assessment on each parcel of forest land in accordance with RCW 76.04.610. When DNR discontinues the forest fire patrol assessment by dissolving the forest protection assessment areas and an existing fire district assumes protection services and property tax levying authority for this unimproved land within its existing boundaries, the assessed value of the fire district will increase and effectively be an annexation for property tax purposes. In order to be included in the assessed value of the fire district, all details of the dissolution and annexation must be completed and the county assessor's office must receive formal notice from the fire district and DNR prior to March 1st of the assessment year. This notice must specify the forest fire patrol assessment areas being dissolved, the fire district(s) assuming the levying and fire protection responsibilities, and the forest land impacted by the change.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 84.08.010, 84.08.070, 84.48.080, 84.55.060, 84.52.0502, chapters 84.52 and 84.55 RCW, and RCW 34.05.230(1). 02-24-015, § 458-19-035, filed 11/25/02, effective 12/26/02. Statutory Authority: RCW 84.55.060 and 84.08.070. 94-07-066, § 458-19-035, filed 3/14/94, effective 4/14/94.]

**WAC 458-19-040 Levy limit—Newly formed taxing district. (1) Introduction.** This rule explains how the levy limit is determined for any taxing district that is created by means other than by consolidation or annexation.

(2) RCW 84.55.035 specifically states that the first regular levy made by a newly formed taxing district created other than by consolidation or annexation is not subject to the levy limit set forth in chapter 84.55 RCW. The newly formed taxing district may levy up to the lesser of the statutory dollar rate limit for that class of district, or the amount approved by the voters when the district was formed, subject to the statutory aggregate dollar rate limit and the constitutional one percent limit. The second regular levy by the district and all subsequent regular levies are subject to the levy limit or, if applicable, the limit described in WAC 458-19-025 regarding the restoration of a regular property tax levy.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 84.08.010, 84.08.070, 84.48.080, 84.55.060, 84.52.0502, chapters 84.52 and 84.55 RCW, and RCW 34.05.230(1). 02-24-015, § 458-19-040, filed 11/25/02, effective 12/26/02. Statutory Authority: RCW 84.55.060 and 84.08.070. 94-07-066, § 458-19-040, filed 3/14/94, effective 4/14/94.]

**WAC 458-19-045 Levy limit—Removal of limit (lid lift). (1) Introduction.** The levy limit may be exceeded when authorized by a majority of the voters voting on a proposition to "lift the lid" of the levy limit in accordance with RCW 84.55.050. This "lid lift" is intended to allow the levy limit to be exceeded for the levy made immediately following the vote on the proposition. The purpose of the lid lift is to allow additional property taxes to be collected at a time when the levy limit in chapter 84.55 RCW is the effective legal constraint to the collection of additional property taxes. This rule explains the procedures for implementing a lid lift ballot

measure when a taxing district wants to ask its voters for the authority to exceed the levy limit.

(2) **Election for approval of lid lift proposition—when held.** The election to approve a lid lift proposition must be held within the taxing district and may be held at the time of a general election, or at a special election called by the governing body of the taxing district for that purpose. The election must be held not more than twelve months prior to the date the proposed levy is to be made. For purposes of this rule, a levy is "made" when the taxing district's budget is certified. The ballot title and measure proposing the lid lift is prepared by the county prosecutor or city attorney, as applicable, in accordance with RCW 29.27.066. RCW 29.27.066 requires a ballot title to include a concise description of the measure, not to exceed seventy-five words. A simple majority vote is required for approval of a lid lift.

(3) **Ballot title and contents of ballot measure.** The text of a ballot title and measure for a lid lift contains the following:

(a) The dollar rate of the proposed levy so that it reflects the total dollar rate for the taxing district, which may be less than the maximum statutory dollar rate allowed for the particular class of taxing district; and

(b) Any of the following limitations that are applicable:

(i) The number of years the increased levy is to be made by the taxing district; however, if one of the purposes of the increased levy is to make redemption payments on bonds of the taxing district, the duration of the increased levy cannot exceed nine years; and/or

(ii) The purpose or purposes of the increased levy.

(4) **Permanent lid lift.** A permanent lid lift occurs when the ballot title and the ballot measure contain none of the limitations stated in subsection (3)(b) of this rule. Approval of a permanent lid lift permanently increases the base used to calculate the levy limit.

(a) The first regular levy of a taxing district made after voter approval of a permanent lid lift proposition is calculated on the basis of the dollar rate stated in the ballot title, but that dollar rate is subject to the constitutional one percent limit and the statutory aggregate dollar rate limit and any applicable prorationing.

(b) The levy limit on regular levies of a taxing district made subsequent to the first regular levy made after voter approval of a permanent lid lift proposition is calculated by multiplying the highest amount that could have been lawfully levied since 1985, including the dollar amount of the regular levy calculated in accordance with (a) of this subsection by the limit factor.

(5) **Temporary lid lift.** A temporary lid lift occurs when the ballot title and the ballot measure contain a time limit for the increased levy or contains a limited purpose or purposes for the increased levy, or both.

(a) The first regular levy of a taxing district made after voter approval of a temporary lid lift proposition is calculated on the basis of the dollar rate stated in the ballot title, but that dollar rate is subject to the constitutional one percent limit and the statutory aggregate dollar rate limit and any applicable prorationing.

(b) The levy limit on regular levies of a taxing district made subsequent to the first regular levy made after voter approval of a temporary lid lift proposition is calculated by

multiplying the highest amount that could have been lawfully levied since 1985, including the dollar amount of the regular levy calculated in accordance with (a) of this subsection by the limit factor.

(c) After expiration of the time limit authorized or satisfaction of the limited purpose for which the lid lift was authorized, whichever comes first, the levy limit as defined in RCW 84.55.005 on the taxing district's subsequent regular levies is calculated as if the lid lift proposition had not been approved.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 84.08.010, 84.08.070, 84.48.080, 84.55.060, 84.52.0502, chapters 84.52 and 84.55 RCW, and RCW 34.05.230(1). 02-24-015, § 458-19-045, filed 11/25/02, effective 12/26/02. Statutory Authority: RCW 84.55.060 and 84.08.070. 94-07-066, § 458-19-045, filed 3/14/94, effective 4/14/94.]

**WAC 458-19-050 Port district levies. (1) Introduction.** This rule describes the various port district levies and the limitations to which they are subject. Port district levies are not limited by the constitutional one percent limit nor by the statutory aggregate dollar rate limit. As set forth in RCW 84.04.140, all port district levies are regular levies regardless of whether they are voted levies.

(2) **Levy for general port purposes.** Port districts may annually levy taxes for general port purposes, including the establishment of a capital improvement fund for future capital improvements. This levy cannot exceed forty-five cents per thousand dollars of assessed value of the port district. This levy may be made without an authorizing vote of the voters of the district.

(3) **Levy for bond repayment.** Port districts may levy taxes for the purpose of paying the principal and interest on any general bonded indebtedness of the port district. Even though this levy is not subject to any dollar rate limitation, the limitations on the amount of indebtedness that a port district may incur by contract or borrowing and the levy limit do apply.

(4) **Levy for dredging, canal construction, or land leveling or filling purposes.** Port districts may annually levy taxes for dredging, canal construction, or land leveling or filling purposes, and the proceeds of any such levy must be used exclusively for these purposes. This levy cannot exceed forty-five cents per thousand dollars of assessed value of the port district. This levy must first be authorized by a majority of the voters of the district voting on whether to make such a levy, submitted at an election held under RCW 29.13.020.

(5) **Levy for industrial development district purposes.** Port districts that have adopted a comprehensive scheme of harbor improvements and industrial development may annually levy taxes to be used exclusively for purposes of industrial development districts as described in chapter 53.25 RCW. Any excess revenue collected but not required to complete projects under chapter 53.25 RCW must be used solely to retire the general obligation bonded indebtedness of the district. This levy cannot exceed forty-five cents per thousand dollars of assessed value of the port district. This levy need not be authorized by a vote of the people of the district, except as provided in (b) of this subsection.

(a) **Levy for limited time period.** This levy is limited to a period of six years, and a second six years if the procedures in (b) of this subsection are followed. A third six-year period

is authorized for a port district located in a county bordering the Pacific Ocean that has adopted a comprehensive scheme of harbor improvements and industrial developments when approved by a simple majority of the voters in the port district.

(b) **Notice to be given if levy to last more than six years.** If this levy is intended to extend beyond the first six years these levies were imposed, the port commission must publish notice of this intention, in one or more newspapers of general circulation in the district, after January 1 and not later than June 1 of the year in which the seventh annual levy is to be made. If, within ninety days of the date of publication of this notice, a petition by the required number of registered voters in the port district in accordance with RCW 53.36.100 is filed with the county auditor and certified in the manner prescribed in RCW 29.79.200, the proposition to make these levies in the seventh through twelfth year period must be submitted to the voters of the port district at a special election called for this purpose no later than the date on which a primary election would be held under RCW 29.13.070. Levies may be made during the seventh through twelfth years only if approved by a majority of the voters of the port district voting on the proposition.

**(6) Calculation of the levy limit for port districts.**

(a) The levies described in subsections (2), (3), and (4) of this rule are subject to the levy limit. For purposes of calculating the levy limit, the dollar amount of those levies are combined and the levy limit is calculated as provided in WAC 458-19-020.

(b) The levy for industrial development district purposes described in subsection (5) will be treated as though it were a separate regular property tax levy made by or for a separate taxing district. The first such levy by a port district is not subject to the levy limit.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 84.08.010, 84.08.070, 84.48.080, 84.55.060, 84.52.0502, chapters 84.52 and 84.55 RCW, and RCW 34.05.230(1). 02-24-015, § 458-19-050, filed 11/25/02, effective 12/26/02. Statutory Authority: RCW 84.55.060 and 84.08.070. 94-07-066, § 458-19-050, filed 3/14/94, effective 4/14/94.]

**WAC 458-19-055 Levy limit—Proration of earmarked funds. (1) Introduction.** Certain taxing districts are authorized to make "earmarked" levies for specific purposes. An "earmarked levy" is not a taxing district in and of itself; the levy is included within, or is in addition to, the general regular levy made by a taxing district. Because these levies are generally placed within a taxing district treasury as a separately identified fund, they are often referred to as "earmarked funds." A taxing district is either directed by statute to levy or is authorized by statute to levy, but is not required to levy, for these earmarked funds; that is, some of the underlying statutes are mandatory while others are permissive in nature. This rule only discusses those taxing districts with the statutory authority to reduce their earmarked levies from their budgeted levy amount when they are up against their general levy limit; that is, the levy limit contained in chapter 84.55 RCW. Only those taxing districts having specific authorization to reduce the earmarked levy as a result of the levy limit under this chapter are addressed in this rule.

**(2) Earmarked funds to be reduced only when regular levy affected.** Cities having a regularly organized full-

time, paid, fire department may levy an additional amount for a firemen's pension fund under RCW 41.16.060. Counties are required to annually levy amounts for the developmental disabilities or mental health services fund under RCW 71.20.-110 and for veteran's assistance fund under RCW 73.08.080. These earmarked levies may be reduced if the taxing district's general regular levy is restricted by the levy limit contained in chapter 84.55 RCW. If a reduction is necessary, the earmarked levy may be reduced from its budgeted levy amount in the same proportion as the district's general levy is reduced from its budgeted amount.

In other words, if the taxing district is unable to levy its total budgeted amount because it is restricted by the levy limit under chapter 84.55 RCW, the amount levied for the earmarked fund may be reduced proportionately to the reduction in the taxing district's general regular levy. For example, if the overall budget of the county or city/town is limited by the levy limit, and that levy includes specific amounts earmarked for special purposes, the county or city/town may take the total amount it receives from property taxes and allocate "x" amount to the earmarked fund and the remainder to its general purposes.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 84.08.010, 84.08.070, 84.48.080, 84.55.060, 84.52.0502, chapters 84.52 and 84.55 RCW, and RCW 34.05.230(1). 02-24-015, § 458-19-055, filed 11/25/02, effective 12/26/02. Statutory Authority: RCW 84.55.060 and 84.08.070. 94-07-066, § 458-19-055, filed 3/14/94, effective 4/14/94.]

**WAC 458-19-060 Emergency medical service levy.**

**(1) Introduction.** This rule explains the criteria contained in RCW 84.52.069 relative to a taxing district imposing a limited or permanent regular levy for emergency medical care or emergency medical services. It describes the permitted duration of this levy, the ballot title and measure that must be presented to and approved by the voters, the maximum rate for this levy, and the applicable limits.

**(2) Purpose - voter approval required - who may levy.** An emergency medical service (EMS) levy is a regular voter approved levy. Any taxes collected as a result of this levy can only be used to provide emergency medical care or emergency medical services, including related personnel costs, training for such personnel and related equipment, supplies, vehicles, and structures needed to provide this care or service. An EMS levy must be approved by a super majority of registered voters at a general or special election. Only a county, emergency medical service district, city, town, public hospital district, urban emergency medical service district, or fire protection district is authorized to impose an EMS levy.

**(3) Duration - maximum rate.** An EMS levy is imposed each year for six consecutive years, each year for ten consecutive years, or permanently. If approved, a taxing district can impose a regular property tax levy in an amount that cannot exceed fifty cents per thousand dollars of assessed value of the property of the taxing district.

**(4) Contents of ballot title and measure.** Any ballot title and measure seeking authorization of an EMS levy must conform to the requirements of RCW 29.30.111. A taxing district cannot submit to the voters at the same election multiple propositions to impose a levy under RCW 84.52.069. If the approved ballot title and measure did not authorize the maximum allowable levy rate (fifty cents) for the EMS levy,

any future proposition to increase the rate up to the maximum allowable must be specifically authorized by voters at a general or special election. That is, a taxing district may impose a levy rate up to, but no greater than, the rate contained in the approved ballot measure without obtaining additional voter approval. The ballot title and measure authorizing a taxing district to impose:

(a) An EMS levy for a limited duration must state the name of the taxing district, the maximum rate per thousand dollars of assessed value to be imposed, and the maximum number of years the levy is to be allowed; or

(b) A permanent EMS levy must state the name of the taxing district and the maximum rate per thousand dollars of assessed value to be permanently imposed. A ballot title for this type of levy must include wording to indicate that it is a permanent EMS levy. A taxing district that seeks to impose a permanent levy must also provide for a referendum procedure to apply to the ordinance or resolution imposing the tax. The detailed specifics of this procedure are set forth in RCW 84.52.069(4).

(5) **County-wide EMS levy.** A county-wide EMS levy cannot be placed on the ballot without first obtaining the approval of the legislative authority of any city within the county having a population exceeding fifty thousand. No other taxing district within the county may hold an election on a proposed EMS levy at the same time as the election on a proposed county-wide EMS levy. To the extent feasible, emergency medical care and services must be provided throughout the county whenever the county levies an EMS levy. In addition, if a county levies an EMS levy, the following conditions apply:

(a) Any other taxing district within the county, authorized to levy an EMS levy may do so, but only if the taxing district's EMS levy rate does not exceed the difference between the county's EMS levy rate and fifty cents per thousand dollars of assessed value of the property of the taxing district; and

(b) When a taxing district within the county levies an EMS levy and the voters of the county subsequently approve a county-wide EMS levy, the taxing district must then reduce its EMS levy rate so that the combined EMS levy rate of the county and the taxing district does not exceed fifty cents per thousand dollars of assessed value in the taxing district; and

(c) An EMS levy of limited duration of a taxing district within the county, authorized by the voters subsequent to a county-wide EMS levy of limited duration, will expire concurrently with the county EMS levy.

(6) **EMS levy of taxing district other than county.** Once a taxing district that has the authority to levy an EMS levy has done so within the county, only the county may concurrently levy an EMS levy within the boundaries of that taxing district; all other taxing districts are prohibited from levying an EMS levy within that taxing district's boundaries while it collects an EMS levy.

(7) **Constitutional one percent limit is applicable.** An EMS levy is subject to the constitutional one percent limit for regular property taxes. If a reduction of the rate of an EMS levy is required because this limit is exceeded, it is to be reduced in the manner set forth in RCW 84.52.010(1) and WAC 458-19-075.

(8) **Statutory aggregate dollar rate limit is not applicable.** An EMS levy is not subject to the statutory aggregate dollar rate limit of five dollars and ninety cents per thousand dollars of assessed value (see RCW 84.52.043).

(9) **Applicability of limit factor to EMS levy.** The first year an EMS levy is made following voter approval, the levy limit set forth in RCW 84.55.010 does not apply. However, after the first year any EMS levy made is subject to this limit. In other words, beginning the second year this levy is made it cannot exceed the limit factor multiplied by the highest amount of regular property taxes that could have lawfully been levied since the voters last approved such a levy plus an additional dollar amount calculated by multiplying the increase in assessed value in that district resulting from new construction, improvements to property, and any increase in the assessed value of state-assessed property by the regular property tax rate for the district in the preceding year. The EMS levy is calculated separately from any other levies made by the taxing district for purposes of calculating the levy limit.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 84.08.010, 84.08.070, 84.48.080, 84.55.060, 84.52.0502, chapters 84.52 and 84.55 RCW, and RCW 34.05.230(1). 02-24-015, § 458-19-060, filed 11/25/02, effective 12/26/02. Statutory Authority: RCW 84.55.060 and 84.08.070. 94-07-066, § 458-19-060, filed 3/14/94, effective 4/14/94.]

**WAC 458-19-065 Levy limit—Protection of future levy capacity.** (1) **Introduction.** This rule explains what occurs when a taxing district levies taxes in an amount less than the maximum allowed under the levy limit for any year and how future levies of the district will be calculated.

(2) **Use of maximum lawful levy amount.** In any year when a taxing district other than the state levies taxes in an amount less than the maximum amount allowed by the levy limit, whether voluntarily or as a result of the operation of the statutory aggregate dollar rate limit or constitutional one percent limit reducing or eliminating the taxing district's levy rate, the levy limit for succeeding years after 1985 will be calculated as though the maximum lawful levy amount allowed by the levy limit or the taxing district's statutory dollar rate limit had been levied.

(3) **Examples.**

These examples do not include any amounts for new construction, improvements to property, or increases in the value of state assessed property.

(a) In 2001, the highest amount of regular property taxes that could have been lawfully levied by taxing district "A" as restricted by the levy limit was \$100,000. But in 2001 taxing district "A" is otherwise limited by the statutory aggregate dollar rate limit to a maximum levy of \$95,000. The levy limit for the 2002 levy will be calculated on the basis of what could have been the highest levy amount since 1985, that is \$100,000 multiplied by the limit factor. The amount actually levied in 2001 is not controlling.

(b) Using the same basic facts from the previous example, if the levy amount of district "A" had been limited by the statutory dollar rate limit in 2001 to \$95,000, and \$95,000 was the highest amount of regular property taxes that could have been lawfully levied since 1985, then the levy limit for 2002 will be calculated on the basis of \$95,000, that is \$95,000 multiplied by the limit factor.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 84.08.010, 84.08.070, 84.48.080, 84.55.060, 84.52.0502, chapters 84.52 and 84.55 RCW, and RCW 34.05.230(1), 02-24-015, § 458-19-065, filed 11/25/02, effective 12/26/02. Statutory Authority: RCW 84.55.060 and 84.08.070, 94-07-066, § 458-19-065, filed 3/14/94, effective 4/14/94.]

**WAC 458-19-070 Procedure to adjust consolidated levy rate for taxing districts when the statutory aggregate dollar rate limit is exceeded.** (1) **Introduction.**

The aggregate of all regular levy rates of junior taxing districts and senior taxing districts, other than the state and other specifically identified districts, cannot exceed five dollars and ninety cents per thousand dollars of assessed value in accordance with RCW 84.52.043. When the county assessor finds that this limit has been exceeded, the assessor recomputes the levy rates and establishes a new consolidated levy rate in the manner set forth in RCW 84.52.010. This section describes the prorationing process used to establish a consolidated levy rate when the assessor finds the statutory aggregate levy rate exceeds five dollars and ninety cents. If prorationing is required, the five dollar and ninety cents limit is reviewed before the constitutional one percent limit.

(2) **Levies not subject to statutory aggregate dollar rate limit.** The following levies are not subject to the statutory aggregate dollar rate limit of five dollars and ninety cents per thousand dollars of assessed value:

- (a) Levies by the state;
- (b) Levies by or for port or public utility districts;
- (c) Excess property tax levies authorized in Article VII, section 2 of the state Constitution;
- (d) Levies by or for county ferry districts under RCW 36.54.130;
- (e) Levies for acquiring conservation futures under RCW 84.34.230;
- (f) Levies for emergency medical care or emergency medical services under RCW 84.52.069;
- (g) Levies for financing affordable housing for very low-income households under RCW 84.52.105;
- (h) The portion of metropolitan park district levies protected under RCW 84.52.120;
- (i) The portion of fire protection district levies protected under RCW 84.52.125;
- (j) Levies for criminal justice purposes under RCW 84.52.135; and
- (k) Levies for transit-related purposes by a county with a population of one million five hundred thousand or more under section 5, chapter 551, Laws of 2009.

(3) **Prorationing under consolidated levy rate limitation.** RCW 84.52.010 sets forth the prorationing order in which the regular levies of taxing districts will be reduced or eliminated by the assessor to comply with the statutory aggregate dollar rate limit of five dollars and ninety cents per thousand dollars of assessed value. The order contained in the statute lists which taxing districts are the first to either reduce or eliminate their levy rate. Taxing districts that are at the same level within the prorationing order are grouped together in tiers. Reductions or eliminations in levy rates are made on a pro rata basis within each tier of taxing district levies until the consolidated levy rate no longer exceeds the statutory aggregate dollar rate limit of five dollars and ninety cents.

As opposed to the order contained in RCW 84.52.010, which lists the taxing districts that are the first to have their

levy rates reduced or eliminated, this section is written in reverse order; that is, it lists the taxing districts that must be first either fully or partially funded. If the statutory aggregate dollar rate is exceeded, then the levy rates for taxing districts within a particular tier must be reduced or eliminated on a pro rata basis. The proration factor, which is multiplied by each levy rate within the tier, is obtained by dividing the dollar rate remaining available to the taxing districts in that tier as a group by the sum of the levy rates originally certified by or for all of the taxing districts within the tier.

(a) Step one: Total the aggregate levy rates requested by all affected taxing districts in the tax code area. If this total is less than five dollars and ninety cents per thousand dollars of assessed value, no prorationing is necessary. If this total levy rate is more than five dollars and ninety cents, the assessor must proceed through the following steps until the aggregate dollar rate is brought within that limit.

(b) Step two: Subtract from \$5.90 the levy rates of the county and the county road district if the tax code area includes an unincorporated portion of the county, or the levy rates of the county and the city or town if the tax code area includes an incorporated area, as applicable.

(c) Step three: Subtract from the remaining levy capacity the levy rates, if any, for fire protection districts under RCW 52.16.130, regional fire protection service authorities under RCW 52.26.140 (1)(a), library districts under RCW 27.12.050 and 27.12.150, the first fifty cents per thousand dollars of assessed value for metropolitan park districts created before January 1, 2002, under RCW 35.61.210, and the first fifty cents per thousand dollars of assessed value for public hospital districts under RCW 70.44.060(6).

(i) If the balance is zero, there is no remaining levy capacity for any other junior taxing district at a lower tier and their levies, if any, must be eliminated.

(ii) If the balance is less than zero, then the levies within this tier must be reduced on a pro rata basis until the balance is zero. After prorationing, there is no remaining levy capacity for any other junior taxing districts at a lower tier and their levies, if any, must be eliminated.

(iii) If the remaining balance is greater than zero, this amount is available to the remaining junior taxing districts at a lower tier and the assessor should proceed on to step four.

(d) Step four: Subtract from the remaining levy capacity the levy rates, if any, for fire protection districts under RCW 52.16.140 and 52.16.160, and regional fire protection service authorities under RCW 52.26.140 (1)(b) and (c). However, under RCW 84.52.125 fire protection districts may protect up to twenty-five cents per thousand dollars of assessed value of the total levies made under RCW 52.16.140 and 52.16.160 from prorationing.

(i) If the balance is zero, there is no remaining levy capacity for any other junior taxing districts at a lower tier and their levies, if any, must be eliminated.

(ii) If the balance is less than zero, then the levies within this tier must be reduced on a pro rata basis until the balance is zero. It is at this point that the provisions of RCW 84.52.-125 come into play; that is, a fire protection district may protect up to twenty-five cents per thousand dollars of assessed value of the total levies made under RCW 52.16.140 and 52.16.160 from prorationing under RCW 84.52.043(2), if the total levies would otherwise be prorated under RCW

84.52.010 (2)(e) with respect to the five-dollar and ninety cent per thousand dollars of assessed value limit. After prorationing, there is no remaining levy capacity for any other junior taxing district at a lower tier and their levies, if any, must be eliminated.

(iii) If the remaining balance is greater than zero, this amount is available to the remaining junior taxing districts at a lower tier and the assessor should proceed on to step five.

(e) Step five: Subtract from the remaining levy capacity the levy rate, if any, for the first fifty cents per thousand dollars of assessed value of metropolitan park districts created on or after January 1, 2002, under RCW 35.61.210.

(i) If the balance is zero, there is no remaining levy capacity for any other junior taxing districts at a lower tier and their levies, if any, must be eliminated.

(ii) If the balance is less than zero, then the levies within this tier must be reduced on a pro rata basis until the balance is zero. After prorationing, there is no remaining levy capacity for any other junior taxing district at a lower tier and their levies, if any, must be eliminated.

(iii) If the remaining balance is greater than zero, this amount is available to the remaining junior taxing districts at a lower tier and the assessor should proceed on to step six.

(f) Step six: Subtract from the remaining levy capacity the twenty-five cent per thousand dollars of assessed value levy rate for metropolitan park districts if it is not protected under RCW 84.52.120, the twenty-five cent per thousand dollars of assessed value levy rate for public hospital districts under RCW 70.44.060(6), and the levy rates, if any, for cemetery districts under RCW 68.52.310 and all other junior taxing districts if those levies are not listed in steps three through five or seven or eight of this subsection.

**(4) Example.**

DISTRICT	ORIGINAL LEVY RATE	PRORATION FACTOR	FINAL LEVY RATE	REMAINING LEVY CAPACITY
County Road	1.8000	NONE	1.8000	1.850
	2.2500	NONE	2.2500	
Library	.5000	NONE	.5000	.350
Fire	.5000	NONE	.5000	
Hospital	.5000	NONE	.5000	
Fire	.2000	NONE	.2000	.150
Cemetery	.1125	.4138	.0466	
Hospital	.2500	.4138	.1034	
Totals	6.1125		5.90	

1. Beginning with the limit of \$5.90, subtract the original certified levy rates for the county and county road taxing districts leaving \$1.85 available for the remaining districts.

2. Subtract the total of the levy rates for each district within the next tier: The library's \$.50, the fire district's \$.50 and the hospital's \$.50 = \$1.50, which leaves \$.35 available for the remaining districts.

3. Subtract the fire district's additional \$.20 levy rate, which leaves \$.15 available for the remaining districts.

4. The remaining \$.15 must be shared by the cemetery and the hospital districts within the next tier of levies. The cemetery district originally sought to levy \$.1125 and the hospital district sought to levy \$.25. The proration factor is arrived at by dividing the amount available (\$.15) by the original levy rates (\$.3625) requested within that tier resulting in a proration factor of .4138. And finally, the original levy rates

(i) If the balance is zero, there is no remaining levy capacity for any other junior taxing districts at a lower tier and their levies, if any, must be eliminated.

(ii) If the balance is less than zero, then the levies within this tier must be reduced on a pro rata basis until the balance is zero. After prorationing, there is no remaining levy capacity for any other junior taxing district at a lower tier and their levies, if any, must be eliminated.

(iii) If the remaining balance is greater than zero, this amount is available to the remaining junior taxing districts at a lower tier and the assessor should proceed on to step seven.

(g) Step seven: Subtract from the remaining levy capacity the levy rate, if any, for flood control zone districts under RCW 86.15.160.

(i) If the balance is zero, there is no remaining levy capacity for any other junior taxing districts at a lower tier and their levies, if any, must be eliminated.

(ii) If the balance is less than zero, then the levies within this tier must be reduced on a pro rata basis until the balance is zero. After prorationing, there is no remaining levy capacity for any other junior taxing district at a lower tier and their levies, if any, must be eliminated.

(iii) If the remaining balance is greater than zero, this amount is available to the remaining junior taxing districts at a lower tier and the assessor should proceed on to step eight.

(h) Step eight: Subtract from the remaining levy capacity the levy rates, if any, for city transportation authorities under RCW 35.95A.100, park and recreation service areas under RCW 36.68.525, park and recreation districts under RCW 36.69.145, and cultural arts, stadium, and convention districts under RCW 67.38.130 on a pro rata basis until the remaining levy capacity equals zero.

in this tier of \$.1125 and \$.25 for the cemetery and hospital respectively are multiplied by the proration factor.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 84.08.070, 84.34.141, 84.36.865, 84.52.0502, 09-19-010, § 458-19-070, filed 9/3/09, effective 10/4/09. Statutory Authority: RCW 84.52.010, 84.52.043, and 84.52.0502. 06-02-008, § 458-19-070, filed 12/22/05, effective 1/22/06. Statutory Authority: RCW 84.08.010, 84.08.070, 84.48.080, 84.55.060, 84.52.0502, chapters 84.52 and 84.55 RCW, and RCW 34.05.230(1). 02-24-015, § 458-19-070, filed 11/25/02, effective 12/26/02. Statutory Authority: RCW 84.55.060 and 84.08.070. 94-07-066, § 458-19-070, filed 3/14/94, effective 4/14/94.]

**WAC 458-19-075 Constitutional one percent limit calculation. (1) Introduction.** The total amount of all regular property tax levies that can be applied against taxable property is limited to one percent of the true and fair value of the property in money. The one percent limit is stated in Article VII, section 2 of the state Constitution and the enabling

statute, RCW 84.52.050. The constitutional one percent limit is based upon the amount of taxes actually levied on the true and fair value of the property, not the dollar rate used in computing property taxes. This section explains how to determine if the constitutional one percent limit is being exceeded and the sequence in which levy rates will be reduced or eliminated in accordance with RCW 84.52.010 if the constitutional one percent limit is exceeded. The constitutional one percent calculation is made after the assessor ensures that the statutory aggregate dollar rate limit is not exceeded.

(2) **Preliminary calculations.** After prorationing under RCW 84.52.043 (the five dollar and ninety cent per thousand dollars of assessed value limit) has occurred, make the following calculations to determine if the constitutional one percent limit is being exceeded:

(a) First, add all the regular levy rates, except the rates for port and public utility districts, in the tax code area, to arrive at a combined levy rate for that tax code area. "Regular levy rates" in this context means the levy rates that remain after prorationing under RCW 84.52.043 has occurred. The levy rates for port and public utility districts are not included in this computation because they are not subject to the constitutional one percent limit. The following regular levy rates are used to calculate the combined levy rate of any particular tax code area:

- (i) The local rate for the state levy;
- (ii) Levies by or for county ferry districts under RCW 36.54.130;
- (iii) Levies for acquiring conservation futures under RCW 84.34.230;
- (iv) Levies for emergency medical care or emergency medical services under RCW 84.52.069;
- (v) Levies for financing affordable housing for very low-income households under RCW 84.52.105;
- (vi) The portion of metropolitan park district levies protected under RCW 84.52.120;
- (vii) The portion of fire protection district levies protected under RCW 84.52.125;
- (viii) Levies for criminal justice purposes under RCW 84.52.135; and
- (ix) The levy rate for transit-related purposes by a county with a population of one million five hundred thousand or more under section 5, chapter 551, Laws of 2009.

(b) Second, divide ten dollars by the higher of the real or personal property ratio of the county for the assessment year in which the levy is made to determine the maximum effective levy rate. If the combined levy rate exceeds the maximum effective levy rate, then the individual levy rates must be reduced or eliminated until the combined levy rate is equal to the maximum effective levy rate.

(3) **Prorationing - constitutional one percent limit.** RCW 84.52.010 sets forth the prorationing order in which levy rates are to be reduced or eliminated when the constitutional one percent limit is exceeded. The order contained in this statute begins with the taxing districts that are the first to have their levy rates either reduced or eliminated. Taxing districts that are at the same level within the prorationing order are grouped together in tiers. Levy rates are reduced or eliminated on a pro rata basis within each tier of taxing district levies until the combined levy rate no longer exceeds one percent of the true and fair value of property.

If the constitutional one percent limit is exceeded, the following levies are to be reduced or eliminated in the following order until the combined levy rate no longer exceeds the maximum effective levy rate:

- (a) The levy rate for transit-related purposes by a county with a population of one million five hundred thousand or more under section 5, chapter 551, Laws of 2009;
- (b) The levy rate for fire protection districts protected under RCW 84.52.125;
- (c) The levy rate for criminal justice purposes imposed under RCW 84.52.135;
- (d) The levy rate for county ferry districts under RCW 36.54.130;
- (e) The levy rate for metropolitan park districts protected under RCW 84.52.120;
- (f) The levy rates for levies used for acquiring conservation futures under RCW 84.34.230, financing affordable housing for very low-income households under RCW 84.52.105, and any portion of a levy rate for emergency medical care or emergency medical services under RCW 84.52.069 in excess of thirty cents per thousand dollars of assessed value are reduced on a pro rata basis or eliminated;
- (g) The levy rate for the first thirty cents per thousand dollars for emergency medical care or emergency medical services under RCW 84.52.069;
- (h) The levy rates for city transportation authorities under RCW 35.95A.100, park and recreation service areas under RCW 36.68.525, park and recreation districts under RCW 36.69.145, and cultural arts, stadium, and convention districts under RCW 67.38.130 are reduced on a pro rata basis or eliminated;
- (i) The levy rate for flood control zone districts under RCW 86.15.160;
- (j) The levy rates for all other junior taxing districts, except fire protection districts under RCW 52.16.140 and 52.16.160, regional fire protection service authorities under RCW 52.26.140, library districts under RCW 27.12.050 and 27.12.150, and the first fifty cents per thousand dollars of assessed value for metropolitan park districts under RCW 84.52.120 and for public hospital districts under RCW 70.44.060(6) are reduced on a pro rata basis or eliminated;
- (k) The levy rate of the first fifty cents per thousand dollars of assessed value for metropolitan park districts created on or after January 1, 2002 under RCW 35.61.210;
- (l) The levy rates for fire protection districts under RCW 52.16.140 and 52.16.160, and regional fire protection service authorities under RCW 52.26.140 (1)(b) and (c) are reduced on a pro rata basis or eliminated;
- (m) The levy rates for fire protection service authorities under RCW 52.16.130, regional fire protection districts under RCW 52.26.140 (1)(a), library districts under RCW 27.12.050 and 27.12.150, the first fifty cents per thousand dollars of assessed value for metropolitan park districts created before January 1, 2002, under RCW 35.61.210, and for public hospital districts under RCW 70.44.060(6) are reduced on a pro rata basis or eliminated;
- (n) The levy rates for the county, county road district, and for city or town purposes are reduced on a pro rata basis or eliminated; and
- (o) The levy rate for the state for the support of common schools.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 84.08.070, 84.34.141, 84.36.865, 84.52.0502, 09-19-010, § 458-19-075, filed 9/3/09, effective 10/4/09. Statutory Authority: RCW 84.52.010, 84.52.043, and 84.52.0502, 06-02-008, § 458-19-075, filed 12/22/05, effective 1/22/06. Statutory Authority: RCW 84.08.010, 84.08.070, 84.48.080, 84.55.060, 84.52.0502, chapters 84.52 and 84.55 RCW, and RCW 34.05.230(1), 02-24-015, § 458-19-075, filed 11/25/02, effective 12/26/02. Statutory Authority: RCW 84.55.060 and 84.08.070, 94-07-066, § 458-19-075, filed 3/14/94, effective 4/14/94.]

**WAC 458-19-080 City annexed by fire protection and/or library districts.** (1) **Introduction.** When a city or town is annexed to a fire protection and/or a library district, the city or town is entitled under RCW 52.04.081 and 27.12.390 to levy up to three dollars and sixty cents per thousand dollars of assessed value less the regular levy made by the fire protection and/or library district. However, the limitations upon regular property taxes imposed by chapter 84.55 RCW are still applicable. This rule explains how the first levy following annexation is calculated, how the levy limit is calculated, and the order of any prorationing that may be required.

(2) The assessor will calculate the first levy following annexation as follows:

(a) Calculate the levy and rate for the fire protection and/or library district, including the assessed value of the annexed city or town; and

(b) Subtract the fire protection and/or library district levy rate from the statutory rate (\$3.60 per \$1,000 A.V.) of the city or town. The resulting rate is the maximum levy rate for the city or town even if the fire and/or library district rate is later reduced as a result of prorationing under RCW 84.52.010 to prevent the consolidated levy rate from exceeding the statutory aggregate dollar rate limit or the constitutional one percent limit.

(3) **Levy limit calculation.** The levy limit for the city or town is calculated independently of the calculation performed in subsection (2) of this rule.

(4) **Subtraction of fire protection or library district levy rate.** The fire protection and/or library district levy rate is subtracted from the city or town statutory levy rate before any prorated reduction under RCW 84.52.010.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 84.08.010, 84.08.070, 84.48.080, 84.55.060, 84.52.0502, chapters 84.52 and 84.55 RCW, and RCW 34.05.230(1), 02-24-015, § 458-19-080, filed 11/25/02, effective 12/26/02. Statutory Authority: RCW 84.55.060 and 84.08.070, 94-07-066, § 458-19-080, filed 3/14/94, effective 4/14/94.]

**WAC 458-19-085 Refunds—Procedures—Applicable limits.** (1) **Introduction.** Chapters 84.68 and 84.69 RCW both set out procedures and conditions under which property taxes are refunded. This rule explains the differences between the types of refunds authorized under each chapter, the procedures related to the refunds, and the effect the refunds have on levy limits and the levy setting process in general.

(2) **Court ordered refunds under chapter 84.68 RCW - County tax refund fund levy.** Any person who believes that the taxes levied against their property are unlawful or excessive may pay the taxes under protest, setting forth all the grounds upon which the tax is claimed to be unlawful or excessive, and bring an action in superior court or in any federal court of competent jurisdiction against the state, county, or municipality. RCW 84.68.020. If the court determines that

the taxes were indeed unlawful or excessive, it will enter a judgment in favor of the taxpayer who paid the tax under protest and determine the amount to be refunded to the taxpayer. When such a judgment is entered, the law provides a specific procedure for refunding the money to the taxpayer in RCW 84.68.030 and for taxing districts to generate the moneys to be refunded in RCW 84.68.040. Any and all taxing districts that were levying taxes against the property at the time for which a refund is directed by court order under RCW 84.68.020 must levy, or have levied for them, an amount for the county tax refund fund. The county tax refund fund is a regular levy that is subject to all the applicable levy limitations provided in law for regular levies. However, the law specifically exempts a refund fund levy from the levy limit set forth in RCW 84.55.010.

(a) Method used to make refunds. When a court judgment is entered in favor of a taxpayer, RCW 84.68.030 states that the refund is to be paid via warrants drawn against the "county tax refund fund." If, at the time the judgment is entered, there are no moneys in that fund, then the warrants bear interest and are "callable under such conditions as are provided by law for county warrants."

(b) Process used to generate funds for the county tax refund fund. RCW 84.68.040 provides that as part of the annual levying of taxes for county purposes, the county is required to make and enter a tax levy or levies for the county tax refund fund. The purpose of the refund fund levy is to produce moneys to be deposited into a fund from which a taxpayer, who paid taxes that were later adjudged to be unlawful or excessive, can be repaid, without unduly affecting the operating funds of the taxing districts. This levy has precedence over all other tax levies for county and/or taxing district purposes.

(c) Who makes and enters the tax levies for the refund fund levy? Officers of local taxing districts, the county legislative authority, the county assessor, and any other person or entity that would normally be involved in the levy making process are required to make and enter the refund fund levy. However, if a taxing district is required to levy for the county tax refund fund and fails to do so, or if a taxing district is required to levy for the county tax refund fund and does not have a regular nonvoted levy, then the county legislative authority levies the tax for or on behalf of the district, the assessor sets the rate, and the treasurer collects the tax.

(d) What limitations apply to the county tax refund fund levy? There are four basic levy limitations that need to be taken into consideration: The levy limit set forth in RCW 84.55.010; the constitutional (Article VII, section 2) and statutory (RCW 84.52.010) one percent limit; the statutory dollar rate limit for the various taxing districts; and the aggregate dollar rate limit contained in RCW 84.52.043.

(i) The levy limit set forth in RCW 84.55.010 does not apply to the county tax refund fund levy, regardless of which taxing district is involved (see RCW 84.55.070). Therefore, a taxing district(s) can levy the amount to be refunded even if that amount will cause the total levy of the taxing district to exceed the levy limit. For example, a court orders County A to refund \$10,000 to a Taxpayer. The proper county officials in County A must determine what portion of the \$10,000 is attributable to Taxing District No. 1. For purposes of this example, Taxing District No. 1 owes the Taxpayer \$1,000.

Taxing District No. 1's levy last year was \$30,000. Without considering new construction, improvements to property, and increase in value of state assessed property the levy for this year under the levy limit would be \$30,300. However, Taxing District No. 1's levy for this year, including the refund fund levy, can be \$31,300.

(ii) The constitutional one percent limit, the statutory dollar rate limit, and the aggregate dollar rate limit apply to any refund fund levy. Consequently, any refund fund levy must be contained within the maximum dollar rate authorized by law for any taxing district. For example, if under the levy limit, the county current expense levy rate is \$1.80/\$1,000 and the refund fund levy rate is \$.10/\$1,000 A.V., then only \$1.70 may go to the current expense fund. Similarly, if the current expense levy rate, as limited by the levy limit, is \$1.50/\$1,000 A.V., then the \$.10/\$1,000 is added to the \$1.50 making a levy rate that is \$1.60/\$1,000 A.V. Any combination is possible as long as the total of the two does not exceed the statutory dollar rate maximum of \$1.80/\$1,000 A.V. for levies made for county purposes. All moneys levied for the county tax refund fund levy are allocated first, without consideration of any delinquency, and then whatever balance is remaining goes to the district's operating fund.

(e) Refund fund's relationship to excess levies. Because the refund fund levy is the direct result of a court ordered judgment in a specific amount, it does not matter whether the judgment amount is derived from taxes paid on regular, excess, or bond levies, or any combination of these levies. The refund fund levy is separate and independent of the levies from which it arose. The levy includes an additional amount deemed necessary to meet the obligations of the county tax refund fund, taking into consideration the probable portions of the taxes that will not be collected or collectible during the year in which they are due and payable, as well as any unobligated cash in hand in this fund.

(f) Applicability to school district levies and state school levy. All taxing districts for which, and within which, taxes were collected unlawfully are required to levy for the refund fund. A refund fund for the school district would not be limited by a dollar rate limit. However, the school district refund fund levy would be subject to the constitutional one percent limit because the refund fund is a regular levy subject to all applicable limits. The state school levy will include a refund fund levy, which will be calculated by the department at the time it levies the state school levy. The state, as a taxing district itself, follows the same procedures that apply to any other taxing district, to the extent that those procedures are applicable.

(g) Separate account in county treasury. The county treasurer must keep a separate account for each district for which a refund fund is created and can only disburse money from that account to the taxpayer(s) entitled to receive a court ordered refund.

**(3) Administrative refunds under chapter 84.69 RCW.** Property taxes may be refunded on the order of the county treasurer before or after delinquency if the property taxes were paid under one of the circumstances listed in RCW 84.69.020. These circumstances include errors, changes in valuation or status by a county board of equalization or the state board of tax appeals, and delays in applying for a senior citizen exemption or deferral.

(a) Levy limit set forth in RCW 84.55.010 does not apply. RCW 84.55.070 states that the limitations contained in chapter 84.55 RCW do not apply to property tax refunds paid or to be paid under the provisions of chapter 84.69 RCW. Therefore, an amount necessary to fund any refund paid in accordance with RCW 84.69.020 may be added to the levy for a taxing district without regard to the levy limit. A refund fund levy is not subject to the levy limit. However, the statutory dollar rate limit still applies to each taxing district, as well as the five dollar and ninety cent limit set forth in RCW 84.52.043 and the constitutional one percent limit set forth in Article VII, section 2 of the state Constitution and RCW 84.52.050.

(b) Refunds include interest. Refunds authorized under RCW 84.69.020 must include interest that is payable from the time the taxes were paid. The rate of interest is calculated in accordance with RCW 84.69.100, established annually by the department, and published in WAC 458-18-220.

(c) Examples. Both examples assume that the base for computing the allowable levy is \$10,000 and refer to the county current expense levy rate that may not exceed one dollar and eighty cents per thousand dollars of assessed value in accordance with RCW 84.52.043.

(i) Statutory rate requested does not exceed the dollar rate allowable:

The allowable levy for the county current expense fund	\$10,000
Refunds paid or to be paid	<u>2,000</u>
Total amount of levy	\$12,000
Assessed value	\$7,000,000
Levy rate	\$1.714/\$1,000
The levy rate is within the statutory rate limit of \$1.80/\$1,000	

(ii) Statutory rate requested exceeds the dollar rate allowable:

Allowable levy	\$10,000
Refunds paid or to be paid	<u>2,000</u>
Total amount of levy	\$12,000
Assessed value	\$6,500,000
Levy rate	\$1.846/\$1,000
The dollar rate cannot exceed \$1.80/\$1,000; therefore, the maximum that can be levied is \$6,500,000 x \$1.80/\$1,000	
Amount to be refunded	\$11,700
Amount to be credited to current expense	\$2,000
	\$9,700

(d) The base for computing the following year's levy limit does not include the refund levy amount. In the preceding examples, the base for the following year's levy limit calculation is \$10,000. However, when calculating the additional levy amount based on the value of new construction, improvements to property and any increase in the value of state assessed property, the actual regular levy rate (including the refund levy) is used.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 84.08.010, 84.08.070, 84.48.080, 84.55.060, 84.52.0502, chapters 84.52 and 84.55 RCW, and RCW 34.05.230(1). 02-24-015, § 458-19-085, filed 11/25/02, effective 12/26/02.]

**WAC 458-19-550 State levy—Apportionment between counties. (1) Introduction.** The department is charged with levying the state taxes authorized by law. As part of this task, the department apportions the amount of tax levied for state purposes among the counties in proportion to

the value of taxable property in each county for the year to ensure that each county pays its due and just share of the state tax. This rule explains how the state property tax levy rate is determined, how the department adjusts the previous year's apportionment because of changes and errors in taxable values reported to the department after October 1 of the preceding year, and how the limit factor set forth in RCW 84.55.010 is applied to the state levy.

(2) **Calculation of state levy rate.** The levy rate for the state property tax levy is the lesser of:

(a) \$3.60 per thousand dollars of the full true and fair value of the taxable property in the state; or

(b) The rate that, when applied to the valuation figures specified in subsection (3) of this rule, will produce a total amount equal to the levy limit set forth in RCW 84.55.010. This levy limit equals the limit factor multiplied by the highest state property tax levy of the most recent three annual state levies, plus an amount calculated by multiplying increases in value due to new construction, improvements to real property, and the increase in value of state-assessed property by the state levy rate applicable in the year prior to the current year for which the tax levy is being computed.

(3) **Apportionment between the counties - Adjustment for changes or errors.** When determining the amount of the state levy using the calculations set forth in subsection (2)(b) above, the dollar amount apportioned to each county is based upon the valuation figures reported to the department by each county by October 1 of the levy year. If use of the counties' certified assessed values for state levy purposes causes an erroneous apportionment among the counties because of later changes or later-identified errors in valuation within a county, the department will adjust the following year's levy apportionment to reflect these changes and the corrections for these errors.

(a) For purposes of this rule, a change in taxable value includes any final adjustment made by a reviewing body (county board of equalization, state board of tax appeals, or court of competent jurisdiction) and may also include additions of omitted property, other additions to or deletions from the assessment or tax rolls, any assessment return submitted by a county to the department subsequent to December 1st, or a change in the indicated ratio of a county.

(b) Errors requiring adjustments under this rule include errors corrected by a final reviewing body or any other error that may have come to the department's attention and would otherwise be a subject for correction in the exercise of its supervisory powers.

(4) **Changes or errors in current levy - Adjust apportionment for the following year's levy.** If there are any changes or errors relating to the values used in apportioning the current levy, the apportionment for the following year's levy will be adjusted. For purposes of this apportionment, the department will recalculate the previous year's levy and the apportionment thereof to correct any changes or errors in taxable values reported to the department after October 1 of the preceding year. The department will adjust the apportioned amount of the current year's state levy for each county by the difference between the dollar amounts of state levy due from each county as shown by the original and revised levy computations for the previous year.

(5) **County required to correct any error upon discovery.** Nothing in this rule relieves a county from its obligation to correct any error immediately upon discovery when the correction may be timely made to avoid distortion in the true apportionment of the state levy between counties.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 84.08.010, 84.08.070, 84.48.080, 84.55.060, 84.52.0502, chapters 84.52 and 84.55 RCW, and RCW 34.05.230(1). 02-24-015, § 458-19-550, filed 11/25/02, effective 12/26/02. Statutory Authority: RCW 84.48.080, 84.55.060 and 84.08.010. 82-06-006 (Order PT 82-2), § 458-19-550, filed 2/19/82. Statutory Authority: RCW 84.48.080 and 84.55.060. 81-04-055 (Order PT 81-4), § 458-19-550, filed 2/4/81.]