

Chapter 246-03 WAC
STATE ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT—GUIDELINES

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WAC 246-03-001 Purpose. This chapter implements the statewide rules in chapter 197-11 WAC as they apply to the department of health. These rules are promulgated under RCW 43.21C.120 (the State Environmental Policy Act) and chapter 197-11 WAC (SEPA rules).

[Statutory Authority: RCW 43.70.040. WSR 91-02-050 (Order 122), § 246-03-001, filed 12/27/90, effective 1/31/91.]

WAC 246-03-010 Definitions. In addition to the definitions contained in WAC 197-11-700 through 197-11-799, the following terms shall have the listed meanings throughout this chapter unless clearly indicated otherwise:

- (1) "Acting agency" means an agency with jurisdiction which has received an application for a license, or which is proposing an action.
- (2) "Agency guidelines" means chapter 246-03 WAC.
- (3) "Department" means the department of health.
- (4) "Environmental report" means a document prepared by the applicant, when required by the department, for use in the preparation of a draft EIS.
- (5) "Licensing" means the agency process in granting, renewing or modifying a license.
- (6) "Private applicant" means any person or entity, other than an agency as defined in this section, applying for a license from an agency.
- (7) "Secretary" means the secretary of the department of health or the secretary's designee.
- (8) "SEPA guidelines" means chapter 197-11 WAC.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 43.21C.120 and 43.70.040. WSR 10-20-072, § 246-03-010, filed 9/29/10, effective 10/30/10. Statutory Authority: RCW 43.70.040. WSR 91-02-050 (Order 122), § 246-03-010, filed 12/27/90, effective 1/31/91.]

WAC 246-03-020 Adoption by reference. The department of health adopts the following sections or subsections of chapter 197-11 WAC by reference:

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- 197-11-040 Definitions.
- 197-11-050 Lead agency.
- 197-11-055 Timing of the SEPA process.
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[Statutory Authority: RCW 43.70.040. WSR 91-02-050 (Order 122), § 246-03-020, filed 12/27/90, effective 1/31/91.]

WAC 246-03-030 Timing and procedures for specified major actions. (1) Regulations and licenses relating to radioactive material.

(a) Scope of major action.

(i) Regulations relating to radioactive material shall include the adoption or amendment by the department of any regulations incorporating general standards for issuance of licenses authorizing the possession, use and transfer of radioactive material pursuant to RCW 70A.388.050 and 70A.310.030.

(ii) The issuance, revocation or suspension of individual licenses under RCW 70A.388.050 shall be exempt. However, the following licenses shall not be exempt: Licenses to operate low level waste burial facilities or licenses to operate or expand beyond design capacity mineral processing facilities, or their tailings areas, whose products, or byproducts, have concentrations of naturally occurring radioactive materials in excess of exempt concentrations as specified in WAC 246-232-010.

(b) Timing of SEPA requirements for regulations for radioactive material.

(i) A final EIS or determination of nonsignificance, whichever is determined appropriate by the lead agency's responsible official, shall be completed for proposed regulations relating to radioactive material prior to the hearing preceding final adoption of such regulations.

(ii) The responsible official shall mail to the department of ecology headquarters office in Olympia for listing in the "SEPA register" (see WAC 197-11-508) a copy of any determination of nonsignifi-

cance, a copy of the draft EIS, and a copy of the final EIS. Copies of the draft EIS shall also be mailed to those agencies identified in WAC 197-11-455, and of the final EIS to those agencies identified in WAC 197-11-460. The responsible official shall also give public notice in the form and manner specified in RCW 43.21C.080 of the determination of nonsignificance or final EIS.

(c) Timing of SEPA requirements for licenses for uranium or thorium mills or radioactive waste burial facilities.

(i) The applicant shall be responsible for completing an environmental checklist, furnishing additional information needed by the department to make the threshold determination, and preparing an environmental report regarding the environmental impact of proposed activities for independent evaluation by the department, prior to issuance of a draft EIS by the responsible official. The environmental report shall be submitted within 90 days following determination of significance. The following material presents a more detailed description of the responsibilities of the private applicant as well as of the responsible official.

(ii) The applicant shall be responsible for contacting the responsible official during the early stages of the applicants planning activities to obtain an outline of SEPA requirements.

(iii) Thereafter the private applicant shall be responsible for preparation of an environmental checklist. The responsible official shall review each environmental checklist and, within 15 days of the responsible official's receipt of the checklist, shall prepare and issue either a determination of nonsignificance as per WAC 197-11-340 or a determination of significance as per WAC 197-11-360.

(iv) When the responsible official has issued a determination of nonsignificance, the official shall send the determination and environmental checklist to the applicant and to all agencies with jurisdiction for review and comment as per WAC 197-11-340.

(v) When the responsible official makes a determination of significance, the preparation of an environmental report shall be completed in a manner consistent with the requirements for a draft EIS and shall be the responsibility of the private applicant. If the applicant desires, he may contract with an outside consultant for the preparation of the environmental report. The department may also contract with an outside consultant for the preparation of a draft or final EIS. The department or the department's contracted consultant will independently evaluate the environmental report and be responsible for the reliability of any information used in the draft or final EIS. Unless the scope or complexity of the proposal indicates otherwise, the final EIS shall be issued as described in WAC 197-11-460(6).

(vi) The responsible official shall request review of the draft EIS from the agencies listed in WAC 197-11-455 and from such other agencies as he determines.

(vii) The responsible official shall mail a copy of the draft EIS to the department of ecology headquarters in Olympia for listing in the "SEPA register" (see WAC 197-11-508) and also to those agencies listed in WAC 197-11-455.

(viii) When the responsible official determines that substantial changes are needed or that new information has become available, the preparation of an amended or new environmental report is the responsibility of the private applicant.

(ix) The responsible official shall mail a copy of the final EIS to the department of ecology headquarters office in Olympia for listing in the "SEPA register" (see WAC 197-11-508). The responsible offi-

cial shall also mail copies of the final EIS to those agencies specified in WAC 197-11-460 and shall give public notice of the completion of the final EIS in the form and manner specified in RCW 43.21C.080.

(2) Water system plans for public water systems as per WAC 246-290-100 and RCW 70A.100.050.

(a) Scope of major action. Water system plans are plans developed and submitted to the department for review and approval pursuant to WAC 246-290-100 and RCW 70A.100.050.

(b) Timing and procedures for water system plans prepared by private applicants.

(i) In general, when a private applicant has prepared a water system plan for review and approval by the department, the private applicant shall be responsible for completing an environmental checklist, furnishing additional information needed by the department to make the threshold determination, and preparing the draft and final EIS under the direction of the responsible official. The following material presents a more detailed description of the responsibilities of the private applicant as well as the responsible official.

(ii) Follow steps outlined in subsection (1)(c)(ii) through (iv) of this section.

(iii) When the responsible official makes a determination of significance, the preparation of a draft and final EIS shall be in compliance with WAC 197-11-400 through 197-11-620 and shall be the responsibility of the private applicant. If the applicant desires, he may contract with an outside consultant for preparation of the draft or final EIS. Unless the scope or complexity of the proposal indicates otherwise, the final EIS shall be completed within 60 days of the end of the comment period for the draft EIS.

(iv) See subsection (1)(c)(vi) and (vii) of this section.

(v) When the responsible official determines that substantial changes are needed or that new information has become available, the preparation of an amended or a new draft EIS is the responsibility of the private applicant.

(vi) See subsection (1)(c)(ix) of this section.

(vii) Every water system plan submitted by a private applicant to the department for review and approval shall be accompanied by either a determination of nonsignificance or a final EIS.

(c) Timing and procedure for water system plans prepared by agencies. Every water system plan submitted by an agency to the department for review and approval shall be accompanied by either a determination of nonsignificance or a final EIS.

(3) New public water supply systems and major extensions of existing public water supply systems.

(a) Scope of major action. The approval of engineering reports or plans and specifications pursuant to chapter 246-290 WAC for all surface water source development, all water system storage facilities greater than 500,000 gallons, new transmission lines longer than 1,000 feet and larger than eight inches in diameter located in new rights of way and major extensions to existing water distribution systems involving use of pipes greater than eight inches in diameter, which are designed to increase the existing service area by more than one square mile.

(b) Timing and procedures for projects proposed by private applicants.

(i) In general, when a private applicant seeks the approval of the department for a new public water supply or a major extension to an existing public water supply, the private applicant shall be re-

sponsible for completing an environmental checklist, furnishing additional information needed by the department to make the threshold determination, and preparing the draft and final EIS under the direction of the responsible official. The following material presents a more detailed description of the responsibilities of the private applicant as well as of the responsible official.

(ii) Follow steps outlined in subsection (1)(c)(ii) through (iv) of this section.

(iii) See subsection (2)(b)(iii) of this section.

(iv) See subsection (1)(c)(vi) and (vii) of this section.

(v) See subsection (2)(b)(v) of this section.

(vi) See subsection (1)(c)(ix) of this section.

(vii) Whenever preliminary engineering reports, or plans and specifications for a new public water supply system or a major extension to an existing public water supply system are submitted by a private applicant to the secretary for review and approval pursuant to chapter 246-290 WAC, these reports, plans and specifications shall be accompanied by a determination of nonsignificance or a final EIS.

(c) Timing and procedures for projects proposed by an agency. Whenever preliminary engineering reports, plans and specifications for a new public water supply system or a major extension to an existing public water supply system are submitted by an agency to the secretary for review and approval pursuant to chapter 246-290 WAC, these reports, plans and specifications shall be accompanied by a determination of nonsignificance or a final EIS.

(4) Certificates of need.

(a) Scope of major action. Certificate of need applications are subject to SEPA requirements whenever the applicant proposes to construct a new hospital or to construct major additions to the existing service capacity of such an institution: Provided, That such applications are not subject to SEPA requirements when the proposed construction consists of additions which provide less than 12,000 square feet of floor area and with associated parking facilities designed for 40 automobiles or less: Provided further, That certificate of need applications for "substantial acquisitions" are not subject to SEPA requirements.

(b) Timing and procedures for hospital certificates of need. Where a state or local agency other than the department is lead agency for hospital construction, the department shall not issue a certificate of need approving this hospital construction until the applicant has supplied it with a determination of nonsignificance or a final EIS, and until seven days after the issuance by the lead agency of any final EIS. Nothing in this subsection shall preclude the department from making a commitment to issue a certificate of need to an applicant subject to the timely receipt of an appropriate environmental impact statement or determination of nonsignificance.

(5) Approval of sewerage general plans and/or water general plans described in RCW 36.94.010.

(a) Scope of major action. Sewerage general plans and water general plans shall mean and include those described in RCW 36.94.010.

(b) Timing and procedures for water general plans. Every water general plan submitted by a county to the department for review and approval shall be accompanied by either a determination of nonsignificance or a final EIS.

(6) Plans and specifications for new sewage treatment works or for major extensions to existing sewage treatment works pursuant to chapter 246-271 WAC.

Scope of major action. Plans and specifications for new sewage treatment works or for major extensions to existing sewage treatment works are those which are reviewed and approved by the department pursuant to WAC 246-271-050.

(7) Construction of any building, facility or other installation for the purpose of housing department personnel or for prisons or for fulfilling other statutorily directed or authorized functions.

(a) Scope of major action. The construction of buildings, facilities or other installations for the purpose of housing department personnel or for other authorized functions shall be subject to SEPA requirements, but such construction shall not be subject to SEPA requirements when it consists of additions which provide less than 12,000 square feet of floor area and with associated parking facilities designed for 40 automobiles or less.

(b) Timing and procedures.

(i) The responsible official shall, prior to the request for construction bids, prepare an environmental checklist for each construction project of the type described in (a) of this subsection.

(ii) Within 15 days of the request for construction bids, the responsible official shall make (A) a written declaration of nonsignificance where the responsible official determines that the proposed construction will not have a significant adverse environmental impact or (B) a written declaration of significance where the responsible official determines that the proposed construction will have a significant adverse environmental impact.

(iii) Where the responsible official has made a determination of significance, the preparation of the draft and final EIS shall be in compliance with WAC 197-11-400 through 197-11-620, and shall be the responsibility of the responsible official. Unless the scope or complexity of the proposal indicates otherwise, the final EIS shall be completed within 60 days of the end of the comment period for the draft EIS.

(iv) See subsection (1)(c)(vi) of this section.

(v) The responsible official shall mail to the department of ecology headquarters office in Olympia for listing in the "SEPA register" a copy of any determination of nonsignificance, a copy of the draft EIS, and a copy of the final EIS. Copies of the draft EIS shall also be mailed to those agencies identified in WAC 197-11-455, and of the final EIS to those agencies identified in WAC 197-11-460. The responsible official shall also give public notice in the form and manner specified in RCW 43.21C.080 of the determination of nonsignificance or final EIS.

(8) Approval of final plans for construction of a private psychiatric hospital pursuant to WAC 246-322-020, or construction of an alcoholism treatment facility pursuant to WAC 246-326-020.

(a) Scope of major action. The approval of final plans for construction of a private psychiatric hospital pursuant to WAC 246-322-020, or construction of an alcoholism treatment center pursuant to WAC 246-326-020 shall be subject to SEPA requirements: Provided, That such construction shall not be subject to SEPA requirements when it consists of additions which provide less than 12,000 square feet of floor area and with associated parking facilities designed for 40 automobiles or less.

(b) Timing and procedures for construction of the type described. Where a state or local agency other than the department is lead agency for construction of the type described in (a) of this subsection, the department shall not approve final plans for construction of a private

psychiatric hospital or alcoholism treatment center until the applicant for such approval has supplied the department with a final declaration of nonsignificance or a final EIS for the construction in question, and until seven days after the issuance by the lead agency of any final EIS.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 43.70.040 and 2020 c 20. WSR 22-07-025, § 246-03-030, filed 3/9/22, effective 4/9/22. Statutory Authority: RCW 43.21C.120. WSR 92-02-018 (Order 224), § 246-03-030, filed 12/23/91, effective 1/23/92. Statutory Authority: RCW 43.70.040. WSR 91-02-050 (Order 122), § 246-03-030, filed 12/27/90, effective 1/31/91.]

WAC 246-03-040 Exemptions for emergency actions. If the secretary makes a written declaration that actions must be undertaken immediately or within a time too short to allow full compliance with SEPA requirements; and that such actions are necessary to avoid an imminent threat to public health or safety, or to prevent an imminent danger to public or private property, or to prevent an imminent threat of serious environmental degradation; then such actions may be undertaken without complying with SEPA requirements: Provided, That the department is the lead agency for such actions.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 43.70.040. WSR 91-02-050 (Order 122), § 246-03-040, filed 12/27/90, effective 1/31/91.]

WAC 246-03-050 Determination of lead agency and responsible official. (1) The department shall be the lead agency for the following actions:

(a) Adoption or amendment of regulations relating to radioactive source materials; proposals to construct, operate, or expand any uranium or thorium mill, or any tailings areas generated by uranium or thorium milling, or any low level radioactive waste burial facilities. The responsible official would be the division director, division of radiation protection, environmental health programs. Lead agency determination for other mineral processing proposals should be made in accordance with WAC 197-11-924 through 197-11-948;

(b) Approval of comprehensive plans for public water supply systems when such plans are developed by private applicants and unless indicated otherwise by WAC 197-11-932, 197-11-934 and 197-11-936, and approval of new public water supply systems or major extensions of existing public water supply systems when such systems are being proposed by a private applicant unless indicated otherwise by WAC 197-11-932, 197-11-934, and 197-11-936. The responsible official would be the section head, water supply and waste section, division of environmental health;

(c) Construction of any building, facility, or other installation for the purpose of housing department personnel or for fulfilling other statutorily directed or authorized functions. The responsible official would be a capital programs representative from the management services division, comptroller's office;

(2) Determination of the lead agency for department major actions not listed above shall be made in accordance with the procedures and requirements of WAC 246-03-140 (4)(c) and 197-11-922 through 197-11-948.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 43.21C.120. WSR 92-02-018 (Order 224), § 246-03-050, filed 12/23/91, effective 1/23/92. Statutory Authority: RCW 43.70.040. WSR 91-02-050 (Order 122), § 246-03-050, filed 12/27/90, effective 1/31/91.]

WAC 246-03-060 Recommended timing for threshold determination.

In most cases the time required to complete a threshold determination should not exceed fifteen days. (WAC 197-11-310.)

[Statutory Authority: RCW 43.70.040. WSR 91-02-050 (Order 122), § 246-03-060, filed 12/27/90, effective 1/31/91.]

WAC 246-03-070 Threshold determination process. In making a threshold determination, the responsible official shall follow the process outlined in WAC 197-11-330 through 197-11-390.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 43.70.040. WSR 91-02-050 (Order 122), § 246-03-070, filed 12/27/90, effective 1/31/91.]

WAC 246-03-080 Adjudicative proceeding. Any person has the right to an adjudicative proceeding to contest the department's final threshold determination that an EIS is or is not necessary and/or the sufficiency of the final EIS. The proceeding is governed by the Administrative Procedure Act (chapter 34.05 RCW), the rules in this chapter, and by chapter 246-08 WAC. If any provision in this chapter conflicts with chapter 246-08 WAC, the provision in this chapter governs.

(1) A person contesting a department's decision shall within twenty-eight days of the department's official notice of issuance of a final threshold determination or final EIS:

(a) File a written application for an adjudicative proceeding by a method showing proof of receipt by the department of health; and

(b) Include in or with the application:

(i) A specific statement of the issue or issues and law involved; and

(ii) The grounds for contesting the department decision.

(2) The initial order should be made within sixty days of the department's receipt of the application. When a party files a petition for administrative review, the review order should be made within sixty days of the department's receipt of the petition. The time to enter an order is extended by as many days as the proceeding is continued on motion by any party.

(3)(a) If the adjudicative order is that an EIS should be filed, the presiding officer or reviewing officer shall remand the matter to the department of health to file an EIS.

(b) If the adjudicative order is that the final EIS is not sufficient, the presiding officer or reviewing officer shall remand the matter to the department of health to correct the insufficiency.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 43.70.040. WSR 91-02-050 (Order 122), § 246-03-080, filed 12/27/90, effective 1/31/91.]

WAC 246-03-090 Scoping. When the department receives a scoping notice from a lead agency, the department shall submit any comments to the lead agency within twenty-one days from the date of issuance of the determination of significance. When the department is lead agency the steps in WAC 197-11-408 and 197-11-410 shall be followed.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 43.70.040. WSR 91-02-050 (Order 122), § 246-03-090, filed 12/27/90, effective 1/31/91.]

WAC 246-03-100 Issuance of draft EIS. When the department is lead agency, it shall issue the draft EIS in accordance with WAC 197-11-455.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 43.70.040. WSR 91-02-050 (Order 122), § 246-03-100, filed 12/27/90, effective 1/31/91.]

WAC 246-03-110 Policies and procedures for conditioning or denying permits or other approvals. (1) The policies and goals in this section are supplementary to existing authorities of the department.

(2) It is the policy of the department to avoid or mitigate adverse environmental impacts which may result from the department's decisions.

(3) The department shall use all practical means, consistent with other essential considerations of state policy, to improve and coordinate plans, functions, programs, and resources to the end that the state and its citizens may:

(a) Fulfill the responsibilities of each generation as trustee of the environment for succeeding generations;

(b) Assure for all people of Washington safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings;

(c) Attain the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment without degradation, risk to health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences;

(d) Preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage;

(e) Maintain, wherever possible, an environment which supports diversity and variety of individual choice;

(f) Achieve a balance between population and resource use which will permit high standards of living and a wide sharing of life's amenities; and

(g) Enhance the quality of renewable resources and approach the maximum attainable recycling of depletable resources.

(4) The department recognizes that each person has a fundamental and inalienable right to a healthful environment and that each person has a responsibility to contribute to the preservation and enhancement of the environment.

(5) The department shall ensure that presently unquantified environmental amenities and values will be given appropriate consideration in decision-making along with economic and technical considerations.

(6)(a) When the environmental document for a proposal shows it will cause significant adverse impacts, the responsible official shall consider whether:

(i) The environmental document identified mitigation measures that are reasonable and capable of being accomplished;

(ii) Other local, state, or federal requirements and enforcement would mitigate the significant adverse environmental impacts; and

(iii) Reasonable mitigation measures are sufficient to mitigate the significant adverse impacts.

(b) The responsible official may:

(i) Condition the approval for a proposal if mitigation measures are reasonable and capable of being accomplished and the proposal is inconsistent with the policies in this section; or

(ii) Deny the permit or approval for a proposal if reasonable mitigation measures are insufficient to mitigate significant adverse environmental impacts and the proposal is inconsistent with the policies in this section.

(c) The procedures in WAC 197-11-660 shall also be followed when conditioning or denying permits or other approvals.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 43.70.040. WSR 91-02-050 (Order 122), § 246-03-110, filed 12/27/90, effective 1/31/91.]

WAC 246-03-120 Public hearings. A public hearing on the environmental impact of a proposal shall be held as specified in WAC 197-11-535.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 43.70.040. WSR 91-02-050 (Order 122), § 246-03-120, filed 12/27/90, effective 1/31/91.]

WAC 246-03-130 Responsibilities of the department as a consulted agency. Other lead agencies may request the department for consultation during the SEPA process. The department shall then provide consultation in accordance with the requirements of WAC 197-11-502, 197-11-545 and 197-11-570.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 43.70.040. WSR 91-02-050 (Order 122), § 246-03-130, filed 12/27/90, effective 1/31/91.]

WAC 246-03-140 Designation of a responsible official. The secretary shall designate the responsible official for any major action for which the department is lead agency when such designation has not occurred elsewhere in these agency guidelines.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 43.21C.120 and 43.70.040. WSR 10-20-072, § 246-03-140, filed 9/29/10, effective 10/30/10. Statutory Authority: RCW 43.21C.120. WSR 92-02-018 (Order 224), § 246-03-140, filed 12/23/91, effective 1/23/92. Statutory Authority: RCW 43.70.040. WSR 91-02-050 (Order 122), § 246-03-140, filed 12/27/90, effective 1/31/91.]

WAC 246-03-150 SEPA public information. (1) When the department is lead agency, the responsible official shall retain SEPA documents required by this chapter and shall make them available to the public in accordance with chapter 42.17 RCW.

(2) When the department is lead agency, the responsible official shall transmit copies of the following documents to the department of ecology headquarters office in Olympia:

(a) All draft and final EISs. (See WAC 197-11-455 and 197-11-460.)

(b) All determinations of nonsignificance (see WAC 197-11-340).

[Statutory Authority: RCW 43.70.040. WSR 91-02-050 (Order 122), § 246-03-150, filed 12/27/90, effective 1/31/91.]

WAC 246-03-160 Severability. If any provision of this chapter or its application to any person or circumstances is held invalid, the remainder of this chapter, or the application of the provision to other persons or circumstances, shall not be affected.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 43.70.040. WSR 91-02-050 (Order 122), § 246-03-160, filed 12/27/90, effective 1/31/91.]