

WAC 480-07-160 Confidential and other restricted information.

Several statutory provisions limit or prevent disclosure of certain information provided to the commission, including provisions exempting specified public records from disclosure or preventing the release of confidential information until affected parties have an opportunity to obtain a court order forbidding the release. The commission will provide special handling of, and restrict access to, information provided to the commission under these statutory provisions. This rule addresses each of these types of restricted information, including how to designate documents as containing exempt information, confidential information, or highly confidential information. Chapter 480-04 WAC governs the commission's specific process for responding to requests for public records that seek restricted information. WAC 480-07-420 governs access to, and exchange of, restricted information by parties in commission adjudicative proceedings.

(1) **Designated official.** The commission's secretary is the designated official responsible for the commission's compliance with the Public Records Act, chapter 42.56 RCW, and for the implementation of this rule. The secretary may designate one or more persons to serve as public records officer to assist in the implementation and application of this rule.

(2) **Definitions.**

(a) *Document* means any writing as the legislature has defined that term in the Public Records Act, chapter 42.56 RCW.

(b) *Confidential information* means valuable commercial information, including trade secrets or confidential marketing, cost, or financial information, or customer-specific usage and network configuration and design information, as provided in RCW 80.04.095 and 81.77.210.

(c) *Exempt information* means information protected from inspection or copying under an exemption from disclosure under chapter 42.56 RCW or any other provisions of law providing an exemption from public disclosure.

(d) *Highly confidential information* means confidential information subject to heightened protection pursuant to a commission-issued protective order with provisions governing such information.

(e) *Provider* means any person who submits information to the commission or commission staff under a claim that disclosure of the information is restricted pursuant to this rule; provided that for purposes of complying with subsection (5) of this section, "provider" does not include individuals who provide their own financial or personally identifiable information to the commission.

(f) *Redacted version* means the version of a document submitted to the commission with restricted information masked.

(g) *Requester* means any person who submits a request for public records under the Public Records Act, chapter 42.56 RCW.

(h) *Restricted information* means exempt, confidential, or highly confidential information.

(i) *Unredacted version* means the version of a document submitted to the commission with all information unmasked and visible.

(3) **Waiver.** A provider may claim the protection of this rule only by strict compliance with its requirements. The commission may refuse to accept for filing any document that fails to comply with these requirements. Failure to properly designate confidential or highly confidential information as required in this rule, WAC 480-07-420, or a commission protective order may result in disclosure of the information in response to a request for public records or in discovery. If a

provider fails to properly designate, or otherwise does not properly treat, exempt, confidential, or highly confidential information that belongs to another person, that person may petition or file a motion with the commission seeking to protect the information and requesting any other appropriate relief.

(4) **Exempt information.**

(a) *Designating information as exempt from disclosure.* Any provider claiming that information provided to the commission is exempt from disclosure must make that claim in writing at the time the provider submits the document containing the information. The provider must also state the basis for the claim of exemption at the time the provider submits information claimed to be exempt.

(b) *Provision of documents with information designated as exempt.* Any provider claiming that a document contains exempt information must submit both a redacted and an unredacted version to the commission.

(c) *Marking and submission.*

(i) The provider must clearly designate information claimed to be exempt on each page of the unredacted version by highlighting the text with no more than twenty percent gray shading. The provider must clearly mark each copy of the document with the designation, "Shaded information is designated as exempt per WAC 480-07-160" on the first page of a multipage document and on each specific page that the provider claims contains exempt information, except as modified pursuant to subsection (7)(a) of this section or WAC 480-07-420 and except as provided in subsection (8) of this section.

(ii) The provider must print on yellow paper any required paper copy of the pages of the unredacted version of a document that contain information designated as exempt and submit that document, in its entirety, in a sealed envelope. A provider submitting more than one document containing information designated as exempt as part of the same filing must collate all of these documents into a set, and to the extent feasible, must enclose each entire set in a separate envelope. If the commission requires more than one paper copy of documents to be submitted, the provider must submit each set of documents containing information designated as exempt in a separate envelope to the extent feasible.

(iii) The provider must label the redacted version of the document as redacted. The provider must either completely black out the information claimed to be exempt or leave a blank space where that information is located in the redacted version. The redacted and unredacted versions of a document must have the same pagination, and the text on each page must appear on the same lines. If the provider submits a document under a claim that all of the substantive information contained on multiple contiguous pages is exempt, the provider may submit a single page in the redacted version for the contiguous exempt pages if that page identifies the pages claimed to contain exempt information.

(iv) The provider must file the redacted and unredacted versions with the commission in the same web portal submission. If using another type of submission, the provider must file the redacted and unredacted versions at the same time but in separate submissions. When submitting electronic unredacted versions, the provider must state in the description field of the web portal submission, in the subject line of the transmitting email, or on a visible portion of the disc or electronic storage medium, whichever is applicable, that one or more documents in the filing contain information designated as exempt under this section.

(d) *Procedures upon a request for information designated as exempt.* If a requester submits a public records request for information that a provider has designated as exempt, the commission will follow the procedures outlined in chapter 480-04 WAC.

(e) *Challenges to designations of information as exempt.* The commission or a party to a proceeding in which a provider submits a document with information designated as exempt may challenge that designation. The commission will provide an opportunity to the provider and the parties to any adjudication to respond before ruling on the challenge. The commission may express its ruling orally on the record in an adjudicative proceeding, or in a written order.

(5) Confidential information.

(a) *Designating information as confidential information.* Any provider claiming that information provided to the commission is confidential must make that claim in writing at the same time the provider submits the document containing the information and must state the basis for the claim. To the extent feasible, the provider also must identify any person (other than the provider) who might be directly affected by disclosure of the confidential information.

(b) *Provision of documents with information designated as confidential.* Any provider claiming that a document contains confidential information must submit both a redacted and an unredacted version to the commission.

(c) *Marking and submission.*

(i) The provider must clearly designate information claimed to be confidential on each page of the unredacted version by highlighting the text with no more than twenty percent gray shading. The provider must clearly mark each copy of the unredacted version of the document with the designation, "Shaded information is designated as confidential per WAC 480-07-160" on the first page of a multipage document and on each specific page the provider claims contains confidential information except as modified pursuant to subsection (7)(a) of this section or WAC 480-07-420 with respect to confidential information provided pursuant to a protective order and except as provided in subsection (8) of this section.

(ii) The provider must print on yellow paper any required paper copy of the pages of the unredacted version of a document that contain information designated as confidential and submit that document, in its entirety, in a sealed envelope. A provider submitting more than one document containing information designated as confidential as part of the same filing must collate all of these documents into a set, and to the extent feasible, must enclose each entire set in a separate envelope. If the commission requires more than one paper copy of documents to be submitted, the provider must submit each set of documents containing information designated as confidential in a separate envelope to the extent feasible.

(iii) The provider must label the redacted version of the document as redacted. The provider must either completely black out the information claimed to be confidential or leave a blank space where that information is located in the document. The redacted and unredacted versions of a document must have the same pagination, and the text on each page must appear on the same lines. If the provider submits a document under a claim that all of the substantive information contained on multiple contiguous pages is confidential, the provider may submit a single page in the redacted version for the contiguous confidential pages if that page identifies the pages claimed to contain confidential information.

(iv) The provider must file the redacted and unredacted versions with the commission in the same web portal submission. If using another type of submission, the provider must file the redacted and unredacted versions at the same time but in separate submissions. When submitting electronic unredacted versions, the provider must state in the description field of the web portal submission, in the subject line of the transmitting email, or on a visible portion of the disc or electronic storage medium, whichever is applicable, that one or more documents in the filing contain information designated as confidential under this section.

(d) *Request for information designated as confidential.* If a requester submits a public records request for information that a provider has designated as confidential, the commission will follow the applicable process in chapter 480-04 WAC, WAC 480-07-420, or applicable protective order.

(e) *Challenges to designations of information as confidential.* The commission or a party to a proceeding in which a provider submits a document with information designated as confidential may challenge that designation. The commission will provide an opportunity to the provider and the parties to any adjudication to respond before ruling on the challenge. The provider of the information designated as confidential bears the burden to show that part or all of that information should be protected from disclosure. The commission may express its ruling orally on the record in an adjudicative proceeding, or in a written order.

(6) Highly confidential information.

(a) *Designating information as highly confidential.* Any provider claiming that information provided to the commission is highly confidential must make that claim in writing at the time the provider submits the document containing the information. The provider also must identify the highly confidential protective order providing the basis for the claim.

(b) *Provision of documents containing highly confidential information.* Any provider claiming that a document contains highly confidential information must submit a redacted and an unredacted version to the commission.

(c) *Marking and submission.*

(i) The provider must clearly designate information claimed to be highly confidential on each page of the unredacted version by highlighting the text with no more than twenty percent gray shading. The provider must clearly mark each copy of the document with the designation, "Shaded information designated as highly confidential per protective order in Docket (insert docket number)" on the first page of a multipage document and on each specific page which the provider claims contains highly confidential information, except as modified pursuant to subsection (7)(a) of this section or WAC 480-07-420 and except as provided in subsection (8) of this section.

(ii) The provider must print on blue paper any required paper copy of the pages of the unredacted version of a document that contain information designated as highly confidential and submit that document, in its entirety, in a sealed envelope. A provider submitting more than one document containing information designated as highly confidential as part of the same filing must collate all of these documents into a set, and to the extent feasible, must enclose each entire set in a separate envelope. If the commission requires more than one paper copy of documents to be filed, the provider must submit

each set of documents containing information designated as highly confidential in a separate envelope to the extent feasible.

(iii) The provider must label the redacted version of the document as redacted. The provider must either completely black out the information claimed to be highly confidential or leave a blank space where that information is located in the redacted document. The redacted and unredacted versions of a document must have the same pagination, and the text on each page must appear on the same lines. If the provider submits a document under a claim that all of the substantive information contained on multiple contiguous pages is highly confidential, the provider may submit a single page in the redacted version for the contiguous restricted pages if that page identifies the pages claimed to be highly confidential.

(iv) The provider must file the redacted and unredacted versions with the commission in the same web portal submission. If using another type of submission, the provider must file the redacted and unredacted versions at the same time but in separate submissions. When submitting electronic unredacted versions, the provider must state in the description field of the web portal submission, in the subject line of the transmitting email, or on a visible portion of the disc or electronic storage medium, whichever is applicable, that one or more documents in the filing contain information designated as highly confidential under the applicable protective order.

(d) *Request for information designated as highly confidential.* If a requester submits a public records request for information that a provider has designated as highly confidential, the commission will follow the applicable procedures in chapter 480-04 WAC, WAC 480-07-420, or the applicable protective order.

(e) *Challenges to designations of information as highly confidential.* The commission or a party to a proceeding in which a provider submits a document that the provider claims contains highly confidential information may challenge that designation. The commission will provide an opportunity to the provider and the parties to respond before ruling on any challenge. The provider of the information designated as highly confidential bears the burden to show that a part or all of that information should be protected from disclosure under the terms of the protective order. The commission may express its ruling orally on the record or in a written order.

(f) *Initial filing.* A provider may withhold information from an initial filing that the provider intends to designate as highly confidential after the commission enters a protective order under the following conditions:

(i) The provider describes the withheld information with reasonable particularity;

(ii) The provider files and serves complete unredacted and redacted versions of all documents that contain information designated as highly confidential as soon as practicable after the commission enters a protective order; and

(iii) The initial filing otherwise complies with all filing requirements in these rules including, but not limited to, the general rate proceeding filing requirements in subpart B. The commission may reject an initial filing if the withheld information is necessary for the commission to determine whether the filing complies with applicable filing requirements.

(7) Procedures for documents containing multiple types of restricted information. Documents submitted to the commission may contain more than one type of restricted information. For example, a

document may contain exempt information on one page and highly confidential information on another page. Any provider submitting a document containing more than one type of restricted information must comply with the provisions of this rule for each type of restricted information, subject to the provisions of this subsection. When the commission receives a request for a document containing more than one type of restricted information, the commission will also follow the procedures listed above for each relevant type of restricted information.

(a) *Differentiating types of restricted information.* The provider is responsible for distinguishing each type of restricted information from another when a document contains more than one type of restricted information. Possible methods for doing so include, but are not limited to, underlining or bracketing one type of information. The provider must identify the method used on each page of the document that contains that type of restricted information, e.g., by modifying the required designations to state, "Underlined and shaded information designated as highly confidential per protective order in Docket (insert docket number)," and "Shaded only information designated as exempt under WAC 480-07-160." The method used must be visible on both the redacted and unredacted versions of the document.

(b) *Documents containing no highly confidential information.* When a document contains both exempt and confidential information but no highly confidential information, the provider must submit a single unredacted version with all restricted information marked in accordance with subsections (4)(c), (5)(c), and (7)(a) of this section except as provided in subsection (8) of this section. The provider must submit a single redacted version with all restricted information masked.

(c) *Documents containing highly confidential information in addition to other types of restricted information.* When the document contains highly confidential information in addition to one or more other types of restricted information, the provider must submit a single unredacted version with all restricted information marked in accordance with subsections (4)(c), (5)(c), (6)(c), and (7)(a) of this section, as applicable, except as provided in subsection (8) of this section. The provider must submit at least two different redacted versions of the document. The first redacted version must mask all highly confidential information, but leave all other restricted information unmasked. The second must mask all highly confidential information and all other restricted information.

(8) **Spreadsheets.** If the cells in a spreadsheet or other tabular document include information that has been designated as exempt, confidential, or highly confidential and that would be impractical or unduly burdensome to mark as required in subsections (4) through (7) of this section, the provider need not comply with those requirements but must identify that information in a way that reasonably provides the commission with sufficient identification of the information to be protected and the basis for that protection.

(9) **Designation or redesignation of exempt, confidential, or highly confidential information.** No later than the time for filing briefs or, if no briefs are filed, within ten days after the close of the record in an adjudication in which a party has designated information as exempt, confidential, or highly confidential, that party must verify the accuracy of all such designations in the record and in the exhibit list for the proceeding, and submit to the commission any proposed corrections or changes. Absent a statement of proposed corrections or changes, the designations in the record and in the exhibit

list are final, and the commission will change those designations only if the provider voluntarily removes, or is required by law to remove, the designation.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 80.01.040 and 80.04.160. WSR 18-20-002 (Docket A-130355, General Order R-593), § 480-07-160, filed 9/19/18, effective 10/20/18; WSR 17-06-051 (General Order R-588), § 480-07-160, filed 2/28/17, effective 3/31/17; WSR 08-18-012 (Docket A-072162, General Order R-550), § 480-07-160, filed 8/22/08, effective 9/22/08; WSR 06-16-053 (Docket A-050802, General Order R-536), § 480-07-160, filed 7/27/06, effective 8/27/06; WSR 03-24-028 (General Order R-510, Docket No. A-010648), § 480-07-160, filed 11/24/03, effective 1/1/04.]