

**WAC 458-20-144 Printing industry.** (1) **Introduction.** This rule discusses the taxability of the printing industry. Readers may want to refer to other rules for additional information, including:

- (a) WAC 458-20-141 Duplicating activities and mailing bureaus;
- (b) WAC 458-20-143 Printers and publishers of newspapers, magazines, and periodicals;
- (c) WAC 458-20-102 Reseller permits;
- (d) WAC 458-20-13601 Manufacturers and processors for hire—Sales and use tax exemptions for machinery and equipment.

(2) **Definition.** The phrase "printing industry" includes letterpress, offset-lithography, and gravure processes as well as multi-graph, mimeograph, autotyping, addressographing and similar activities.

(3) **Business and occupation (B&O) tax.**

(a) Printers are subject to the B&O tax under the printing and publishing classification upon the gross income of the business.

(b) Printers of newspapers. From July 1, 2009, through December 31, 2023, printers of newspapers are taxable under the publication of newspapers classification of the B&O tax upon the gross income of the business.

Effective January 1, 2024, printers of newspapers are exempt from B&O tax under RCW 82.04.759 on the amounts received from engaging in printing a newspaper. The exemption amount is reduced by an amount equal to the value of any expenditure made by the person during the tax reporting period. For purpose of this section, "expenditure" has the meaning provided in RCW 42.17A.005.

Persons reporting income under the publication of newspapers classification of the B&O tax, or claiming the B&O tax exemption for income received from engaging in printing a newspaper on or after January 1, 2024, are required to electronically file an annual tax performance report with the department by May 31st of the following year. Refer to RCW 82.32.534 and WAC 458-20-267 (Annual tax performance reports for certain tax preferences) for the specific guidelines and requirements.

(c) **Doing business inside and outside the state.** RCW 82.04.460 requires that advertising income earned by printers derived from business activities performed within Washington be apportioned to this state for tax purposes. Refer to chapter 23 (E2SSB 6143), Laws of 2010 1st sp. sess. Part I for information on apportioning advertising income.

(4) **Retail sales tax.**

(a) The printing or imprinting of advertising circulars, books, briefs, envelopes, folders, posters, racing forms, tickets, and other printed matter, whether upon special order or upon materials furnished either directly or indirectly by the customer is a retail sale and subject to the retail sales tax, provided the customer either consumes, or distributes such articles free of charge, and does not resell such articles in the regular course of business. The retail sales tax is computed upon the total charge for printing, and the printer may not deduct the cost of labor, author's alterations, or other service charges in performing the printing, even though such charges may be stated or shown separately on invoices.

(b) Sales of printed matter to advertising agencies who purchase for their own use or for the use of their clients, and not for resale in the regular course of business, are sales for consumption and subject to the retail sales tax.

(c) Sales of tickets to theater owners, amusement operators, transportation companies and others are sales for consumption and subject to the retail sales tax. Such tickets are not resold by theater owners or amusement proprietors as tangible personal property but are used merely as a receipt to the patrons for payment and as evidence of the right to admission or transportation.

(d) Sales of school annuals and similar publications by printers to school districts, private schools or student organizations therein are subject to the retail sales tax.

(e) Sales by printers of books, envelopes, folders, posters, racing forms, stationery, tickets and other printed matter to dealers for resale in the regular course of business are wholesale sales. Such sales are not subject to retail sales tax when the seller obtains a reseller permit from the buyer to document the wholesale nature of the sale as provided in WAC 458-20-102 (Reseller permits).

(f) Charges made by bookbinders or printers for imprinting, binding or rebinding of materials for consumers are subject to the retail sales tax.

(g) Sales to printers of equipment, supplies and materials which do not become a component part or ingredient of the finished printed matter sold or which are put to "intervening use" before being resold are subject to the retail sales tax unless specifically exempt (see subsection (5) of this section). This includes, among others, sales of fuel, furniture, and lubricants.

(h) Sales to printers of paper stock and ink which become a part of the printed matter sold are sales for resale and are not subject to retail sales tax when the buyer provides a reseller permit (WAC 458-20-102) to the seller.

(5) **Exemption for sales of computer equipment to printers.** RCW 82.08.806 and 82.12.806 provide a retail sales and use tax exemption to a printer or publisher for the following:

(a) Purchase and use of computer equipment primarily used in printing or publishing of any printed materials. This includes for repair parts and replacement parts of such qualifying equipment. "Computer equipment" has the same meaning as defined in RCW 82.08.806 (3)(b). "Primarily" means greater than 50 percent as measured by time. RCW 82.08.806 (3)(d).

(b) Sales of or charges made for labor and services rendered in respect to installing, repairing, cleaning, altering, or improving the computer equipment.

These exemptions apply only to computer equipment not otherwise exempt under RCW 82.08.02565.

(6) **Commissions and discounts.**

(a) There is a general trade practice in the printing industry of making allowances to advertising agencies of a certain percentage of the gross charge made for printed matter ordered by the agency either in its own name or in the name of the advertiser. This allowance may be a "commission" or may be a "discount."

(b) A "commission" paid by a seller constitutes an expense of doing business and is not deductible from the measure of B&O tax or retail sales tax. On the other hand, a "discount" is a deduction from an established selling price allowed to buyers, and a bona fide discount is deductible under both B&O tax and retail sales tax.

(c) In order that there may be a definite understanding, printers, advertising agencies and advertisers are advised that tax liability in such cases is as follows:

(i) The allowance taken by an advertising agency will be deductible as a discount in the computation of the printer's liability only in the event that the printer bills the charge on a net basis; i.e., less the discount.

(ii) Where the printer bills the gross charge to the agency, and the advertiser pays the sales tax measured by the gross charge, no deduction will be allowed, irrespective of the fact that in payment of the account the printer actually receives from the agency the net amount only; i.e., the gross billing, less the commission retained by the agency. In all cases the commission received is taxable to the agency.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 82.01.060 and 82.32.300. WSR 24-12-008, § 458-20-144, filed 5/23/24, effective 6/23/24. Statutory Authority: RCW 82.32.300, 82.01.060(2), 82.32.534, 82.32.585, 82.32.590, 82.32.600, 82.32.605, 82.32.607, 82.32.710, 82.32.790, 82.32.808, 82.04.240, 82.04.2404, 82.04.260, 82.04.2909, 82.04.426, 82.04.4277, 82.04.4461, 82.04.4463, 82.04.448, 82.04.4481, 82.04.4483, 82.04.449, 82.08.805, 82.08.965, 82.08.9651, 82.08.970, 82.08.980, 82.08.986, 82.12.022, 82.12.025651, 82.12.805, 82.12.965, 82.12.9651, 82.12.970, 82.12.980, 82.16.0421, 82.29A.137, 82.60.070, 82.63.020, 82.63.045, 82.74.040, 82.74.050, 82.75.040, 82.75.070, 82.82.020, 82.82.040, 84.36.645, and 84.36.655. WSR 18-13-094, § 458-20-144, filed 6/19/18, effective 7/20/18. Statutory Authority: RCW 82.32.300 and 82.01.060(2). WSR 11-04-010, § 458-20-144, filed 1/21/11, effective 2/21/11; WSR 06-04-033, § 458-20-144, filed 1/26/06, effective 2/26/06; WSR 05-03-052, § 458-20-144, filed 1/11/05, effective 7/1/05; Order ET 70-4, § 458-20-144 (Rule 144), filed 6/12/70, effective 7/12/70.]