

WAC 284-29-260 Examples of prohibited matters. The following is a partial, nonexclusive list of things of value that a title company must not give to a producer. Even though a thing of value is not included on this list a title company must not give any other things of value to a producer unless clearly and specifically permitted by WAC 284-29-200 through 284-29-255.

(1) Except as permitted in WAC 284-29-200 through 284-29-255:

(a) A title company must not cosponsor, subsidize, or contribute fees, prizes, gifts, or give things of value for a promotional function or activity off the title company's premises whether the function is self-promotional or not.

(b) Examples of off-premises functions or activities include, but are not limited to:

(i) Meetings;

(ii) Meals, including breakfasts, luncheons, dinners or cocktail parties;

(iii) Conventions, installation ceremonies, celebrations, hospitality rooms or similar functions;

(iv) Outings such as boat trips, fishing trips, motor vehicle rallies, sporting events of any kind, gambling trips, hunting trips, ski trips, shopping trips, golf tournaments, trips to or events at recreational or entertainment areas;

(v) Open house celebrations, or open houses at homes or property for sale;

(vi) Dances; or

(vii) Artistic performances.

(2) A title company must not sponsor, subsidize, supply prizes or labor, or otherwise give things of value for promotional activities of producers.

(3) A title company must not give or offer to give, either directly or indirectly, a compensating balance or deposit in a lending institution for the express or implied purpose of influencing the extension of credit by the lending institution to any producer.

(4) A title company must not disburse or offer to disburse on behalf of any person escrow funds held by the title company before the conditions of the escrow applicable to the disbursements are met.

(5) A title company must not advance, pay or offer to advance or pay money on behalf of any person into escrow to facilitate a closing unless:

(a) The property that is the subject of the escrow is owned by or being purchased by the title company;

(b) The payment is made in compliance with a court order requiring the title company to make the payment; or

(c) In settlement of a bona fide dispute for which the title company may be liable.

(6) A title company must not give, pay or offer to pay, either directly or indirectly, or make payment to a third party for the benefit of any producer for:

(a) The services of a title company employee or representative or an outside professional whose services are required by any producer to complete or structure a particular transaction;

(b) The salary or any part of compensation of an employee of a producer;

(c) The salary or any part of the salary, commission, or any other form of compensation to any employee of the title company who is at the same time actively engaged as a producer;

(d) A fee for making an inspection or appraisal of property, whether or not the fee bears a reasonable relationship to the services performed;

(e) Services required to be performed by any producer in his or her professional capacity;

(f) Any evidence of title or copy of the contents of a document which is not produced or issued by the title company;

(g) The rent for all or any part of any space occupied by any producer, except as provided in WAC 284-29-245;

(h) Money, prizes, or other things of value in any kind of a contest or promotional activity;

(i) Any advertisement published in the name of, for, or on behalf of any producer;

(j) A business form of any producer which is provided for the convenience and benefit of the producer, except a form regularly used in the conduct of the title company's business;

(k) Any earnest money purchase agreements or purchase and sale agreements;

(l) Flyer boxes and stands, for sale signs and posts, or services for the placement of any of them;

(m) Postcards, stamps, flyers, newsletters, folders, invitations, copying, cutting or services related to preparing any of these items;

(n) Car washes or coupons for car washes;

(o) Pictures of producers;

(p) Gift cards of in any amount;

(q) Massages;

(r) Discount certificates; or

(s) The cost of or reimbursement for advisory fees.

(7) A title company must not provide, or offer to provide, all or any part of the time or productive effort of any employee of the title company to any producer. For example, title company employees must not be used by or loaned out to a producer for the self-promotional interests of the producer except as part of the title company's day-to-day business with producers.

(8) A title company must not give or offer to give, pay for, or offer to pay for, furniture; office supplies, including but not limited to, file folders, telephones, computers or other equipment; or automobiles to any producer. A title company must not pay for, or offer to pay for, any portion of the cost of renting, leasing, operating, or maintaining any of these items.

(9) Delivery services between a title company and a producer must be performed by the title company's messenger service or employees and must consist only of delivering items directly related to the title company's title insurance or escrow business from the title company to a producer or from a producer to the title company.

(10) In accordance with its title insurance rates filed with the commissioner, a title company must not provide a title insurance commitment without actually receiving payment for the cancellation fee:

(a) For commitments on noncommercial property, within the earlier of the following:

(i) One hundred eighty days of the first issuance of the commitment; or

(ii) Sixty days of:

(A) The cancellation of the commitment;

(B) When the title company reasonably should know that the commitment has been canceled; or

(C) When the title company reasonably should know that the transaction for which the commitment was issued has been insured by another title company.

(b) For commitments on commercial property, within sixty days of the earlier of the following:

(i) The cancellation of the commitment;

(ii) When the title company reasonably should know that the commitment has been canceled; or

(iii) When the title company reasonably should know that the transaction for which the commitment was issued has been insured by another title company.

(11) A title company must not pay a producer member of its board of directors fees in excess of those paid to nonproducer directors.

(12) A title company must not enter into, agree to, or pay anything of value to a producer under any marketing agreement, access agreement, advertising agreement or any similar agreement.

(13) A title company must not make a donation to any charity in any manner that can reasonably be associated with a producer in exchange for the referral of title insurance business or obtaining customer service information from the title company.

(14) A title company must not pay any fee or consideration to any producer that is in any manner based in whole or in part on the number of transactions between the title company and the producer, regardless of the service being provided.

(15) A title company must not provide escrow, closing, or settlement services for a charge (independent of the rate charged for involved title insurance) that is less than the title company's actual cost either for:

(a) The cost of all parties to the escrow; or

(b) One party's proportionate share of the cost of the escrow.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 48.02.060, 48.29.005 and 48.29.210. WSR 09-05-077 (Matter No. R 2008-21), § 284-29-260, filed 2/17/09, effective 3/20/09.]