

Chapter 70A.550 RCW
WIND ENERGY FACILITIES—LIGHT POLLUTION

Sections

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RCW 70A.550.010 Definitions. The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(1) "Aircraft detection lighting system" means a sensor-based system that:

- (a) Is designed to detect approaching aircraft;
- (b) Automatically activates appropriate obstruction lights until the lights are no longer needed by the aircraft; and
- (c) The federal aviation administration has approved as meeting the requirements set forth in chapter 10 of the federal aviation administration's 2020 advisory circular AC 70/7460-1M, "Obstruction marking and lighting."

(2) "Department" means the department of ecology.

(3) "Hub height" means the distance from the ground to the middle of a wind turbine's rotor.

(4) "Light-mitigating technology system" means aircraft detection lighting or another federal aviation administration-approved system capable of reducing the impact of aviation obstruction lighting while maintaining conspicuity sufficient to assist aircraft in identifying and avoiding collision with a utility-scale wind energy facility.

(5) "Repowering" means a rebuild or refurbishment of a turbine or facility that is required due to the turbine or facility reaching the end of its useful life or useful reasonable economic life. The rebuild or refurbishment does not constitute repowering if it is part of routine major maintenance or the maintenance of or replacement of equipment that does not materially affect the expected physical or economical life of the turbine or facility.

(6) "Utility-scale wind energy facility" means a facility used in the generation of electricity by means of turbines or other devices that capture and employ the kinetic energy of the wind and:

(a) Is required under federal aviation administration regulations, guidelines, circulars, or standards, as they existed as of January 1, 2023, to have obstruction lights; or

(b) Has at least one obstruction light and at least one wind turbine with a hub height of at least 75 feet above ground level.

[2023 c 344 § 1.]

RCW 70A.550.020 Aircraft detection lighting system—Installation of a light-mitigating technology system. (1) Except as provided in *section 3 of this act, beginning July 1, 2023, no new utility-scale wind energy facility with five or more turbines shall commence operations unless the developer, owner, or operator of the facility applies to the federal aviation administration for installation of a light-mitigating technology system that complies with federal aviation administration regulations, as they existed as of July 23, 2023. If

approved by the federal aviation administration, the developer, owner, or operator of such utility-scale wind energy facility shall install the light-mitigating technology system on approved turbines within 24 months after receipt of such approval. If not approved by the federal aviation administration, the developer, owner, or operator of such utility-scale wind energy facility is not subject to this chapter.

(2) Except as provided in *section 3 of this act, beginning January 1, 2028, or upon the completion of repowering, whichever is earlier, any developer, owner, or operator of a utility-scale wind energy facility with five or more turbines that has commenced operations without an aircraft detection lighting system shall apply to the federal aviation administration for installation and operation of a light-mitigating technology system that achieves comparable light mitigation outcomes to an aircraft detection lighting system and that complies with federal aviation administration regulations, as they existed as of July 23, 2023. If approved by the federal aviation administration, the developer, owner, or operator of such utility-scale wind energy facility shall install the light-mitigating technology system on approved turbines within 24 months following such approval. If not approved by the federal aviation administration, the developer, owner, or operator of such utility-scale wind energy facility is not subject to this chapter.

(3) A developer, owner, or operator of a utility-scale wind energy facility shall comply with any wind energy ordinance adopted by a legislative authority of a county pursuant to *section 3 of this act.

(4) Nothing in this section requires mitigation of light pollution to be carried out in a manner that conflicts with federal requirements, including requirements of the federal aviation administration or the United States department of defense. [2023 c 344 § 2.]

***Reviser's note:** Section 3, chapter 344, Laws of 2023 was vetoed by the governor.

RCW 70A.550.030 Penalty—Enforcement—Rule-making authority. (1)

A violation of the requirements of this chapter is punishable by a civil penalty of up to \$5,000 per day per violation. Penalties are appealable to the pollution control hearings board.

(2)(a) The department may enforce the requirements of this chapter.

(b) Enforcement of this chapter by the department must rely on notification and information exchange between the department and utility-scale wind energy facility owners or operators. The department must prepare and distribute information regarding this chapter to utility-scale wind energy facility owners and operators to help facility owners and operators in their advance planning to meet the deadlines.

(c)(i) If the department obtains information that a facility is not in compliance with the requirements of this chapter, the department may issue a notification letter by certified mail to the facility owner or operator and offer information or other appropriate assistance regarding compliance with this chapter. If compliance is not achieved within 60 days of the issuance of a notification letter under this subsection, the department may assess penalties under this section.

(ii) The department may delay any combination of the issuance of a notification letter under this subsection (2)(c), the 60-day period in which compliance with the requirements of this chapter must be achieved, or the imposition of penalties for good cause shown due to:

(A) Supply chain constraints, including lack of light-mitigating technology system availability;

(B) Lack of contractor availability;

(C) Lighting system permitting delays; or

(D) Technological feasibility considerations.

(3) A utility-scale wind energy facility owner or operator of a facility that has commenced operations prior to January 1, 2023, that applies for the approval of a light-mitigating technology system to the federal aviation administration prior to January 1, 2027, but that has not received a determination to approve the system by the federal aviation administration as of July 1, 2027, may not be assessed a penalty under this chapter until at least 24 months after the federal aviation administration issues its determination on the application of the utility-scale wind energy facility's proposed light-mitigating technology system.

(4) The department may adopt by rule a light mitigation standard that references a more recent version of any federal requirements referenced in RCW 70A.550.020 in order to maintain consistency between this chapter and federal aviation administration requirements. [2023 c 344 § 4.]