Chapter 458-50 WAC

INTERCOUNTY UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMPANIES—ASSESSMENT AND TAXATION

WAC

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DISPOSITION OF SECTIONS FORMERLY CODIFIED IN THIS CHAPTER

458-50-010 Assessment of public utilities—Purpose—Definitions. [Order PT 75-2, § 458-50-010, filed 3/19/75.] Repealed by WSR 99-08-006, filed 3/25/99, effective 4/25/99. Statutory Authority: RCW 84.12.240.
458-50-050 Access to books, records, and property. [Order PT 75-2, § 458-50-050, filed 3/19/75.] Repealed by WSR 99-08-006, filed 3/25/99, effective 4/25/99. Statutory Authority: RCW 84.12.240.

WAC 458-50-020 Annual reports—Duty to file. Each company doing an inter-county or interstate business in this state shall make and file an annual report with the department. At the time of making such report, each company shall if directed by the department also file with the department:

(1) Annual reports of the board of directors or other officers to the stockholders of the company.

(2) Duplicate copies of the annual reports made to the federal regulatory agency or agencies exercising jurisdiction over the company.

(3) Duplicate copies of the annual reports made to the Washington state utilities and transportation commission or other Washington state regulatory agency exercising jurisdiction over the company.

(4) Duplicate copies of such other annual or special reports as the department may, from time to time, direct each company to make.

[Order PT 75-2, § 458-50-020, filed 3/19/75.]

WAC 458-50-030 Annual reports—Contents. Annual reports shall be made on forms furnished by the department, and shall contain such information as is required to enable the department to determine the true and fair value of a company's operating property in the state, and the apportionment thereof to the several counties and taxing districts. The report shall be signed by the president, treasurer or other responsible official of the company.

(1) In determining what types of information shall be required to be included in the annual report, the department may take into account, among other factors, the necessity and worth of such information in valuing, allocating or apportioning operating property; whether such information is of the type customarily maintained by the industry for internal accounting or regulatory agency purposes; and the cost and difficulty of obtaining or maintaining such information. The department's determination shall be final, and no company shall be excused from providing such information except upon a clear showing that undue hardship would result.

(2) On or before December 1st of the year preceding the calendar year to be covered by the annual report, the department shall notify the companies of the types of information required to be included in the annual report for such forthcoming year: Provided, That the foregoing requirement shall not be applicable for calendar year 1975.

[Order PT 75-2, § 458-50-030, filed 3/19/75.]

WAC 458-50-040 Annual reports—Time of filing—Extension of time. Annual reports shall be filed with the department on or before the fifteenth day of March. The department may grant a reasonable extension of time, not to exceed sixty days, upon written application of the company filed with the department on or before the fifteenth day of March, and showing good cause why such an extension is required. In the event any other report required to be filed with the department, e.g., annual stockholders report or regulatory agency report, is not available at the time the annual report is filed, the company shall so notify the department and thereafter file such report as soon as it becomes available.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 84.12.390. WSR 06-05-034, § 458-50-040, filed 2/8/06, effective 3/11/06; Order PT 75-2, § 458-50-040, filed 3/19/75.]

WAC 458-50-060 Failure to make report—Default valuation—Penalty—Estoppel. (1) If any company, or any of its officers or agents shall refuse or neglect to make any report required by law or by the department, or shall refuse to permit an inspection and examination of its records, books, accounts, papers or property requested by the department, or shall refuse or neglect to appear before the department in obedience to a subpoena, the department shall proceed, in such manner as it may deem best, to obtain facts and information upon which to base its valuation, assessment, and apportionment of such company.

(2) Willful failure to file with the department any report required by the department within the time fixed by law, including any extension granted by the department, shall con-

stitute refusal or neglect to make a report, and the department may proceed in accordance with subsection (1) to value, assess, and apportion the property of such company as if no report had been made.

(3) **Penalty.** When the department has ascertained the value of the property of such company in accordance with subsections (1) or (2), it shall add to the value so ascertained twenty-five percent as a penalty.

(4) Where the department has proceeded in accordance with subsections (1) or (2), such company shall be estopped to question or impeach the valuation, assessment, or apportionment made by the department in any administrative or judicial proceeding thereafter.

[Order PT 75-2, § 458-50-060, filed 3/19/75.]

WAC 458-50-070 Annual assessment—Procedure. (1) **In general.** Annually between the fifteenth day of March and the first day of July the department shall proceed to list and value the operating property of each company subject to assessment by the department. The department shall prepare a report summarizing the information, factors and methods used in determining the tentative value of each such company (hereafter called "report of tentative value"). The department shall prepare an assessment roll upon which shall be placed after the name of each company a general description of the operating property of the company described in accordance with RCW 84.12.200(12), following which shall be entered the actual cash value as tentatively determined by the department.

(2) **Notice of tentative value.** On or before the thirtieth day of June, the department shall notify each company by mail of the tentative valuation entered upon such assessment roll. At the time of making such notification, the department shall also transmit to the company the report of tentative value prepared by the department. Upon written request of a county assessor the department shall also transmit the report of tentative value to such assessor.

(3) **Hearings.**

(a) *In general.* Each company may petition the department for a hearing relating to the value of its operating property as tentatively determined by the department and to the value of other taxable properties in the counties in which its operating property is situated. Such petition shall be made in writing and filed with the department within the first ten working days of July. The department shall appoint a time within ten working days following the hearing request time period for the conduct of such hearing, which may be held in such places throughout the state as the department may deem proper or necessary. Notice of the time and place of any or all hearings shall be given to any person upon request.

(b) The hearing shall be conducted by the director or by any employee or agent of the department designated by the director. A record of the proceedings shall be kept and shall be considered a public record. The hearing shall be recorded with a recording device and the recordings shall become a part of the record of the proceedings and considered a part of the public record. All records and documents presented at the hearing shall become a part of the record of the proceeding and shall be considered a part of the public record, except as provided in (c) of this subsection.

(c) The hearing shall be open to the public, except (i) when the company proposes to offer in evidence information relating to its assessment if disclosure of such information to other persons would violate the company's right to privacy or would result in an unfair competitive disadvantage to such company; or (ii) when the department proposes to offer in evidence information which has been obtained pursuant to RCW 84.12.240 if the disclosure of such information to other persons would violate the company's right to privacy or would result in an unfair competitive disadvantage to such company. The hearing at this point shall be closed to the public unless the company consents to the proceeding remaining open to the public.

(d) Testimony recorded, and all records and documents of a confidential nature introduced, during the period when the hearing is closed to the public shall become a part of the record, but shall not be disclosed except upon order of a court of competent jurisdiction or upon consent of the company.

(e) Records of the proceedings shall be maintained for a period of seven years following the close of the hearing.

(4) **Determination of final value.** On or before the twentieth day of August, the department shall make a final determination of the true and correct actual cash value of each company's operating property appearing on the assessment roll. The department may raise or lower the value from that amount tentatively set pursuant to this section: Provided, That failure of a company to request a hearing shall not preclude the department from setting a final value higher or lower than that amount tentatively set pursuant to this section: Provided further, That where a company has not requested a hearing, the department shall not adopt a final value higher than that tentatively set except after giving five days written notice to the company. The department shall notify each company by mail of the final true and correct actual cash value as determined by the department.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 84.12.390. WSR 06-05-034, § 458-50-070, filed 2/8/06, effective 3/11/06. Statutory Authority: RCW 84.12.340 and 84.12.-390. WSR 88-15-016 (Order PT 88-10), § 458-50-070, filed 7/11/88; Order PT 75-2, § 458-50-070, filed 3/19/75.]

WAC 458-50-080 True cash value—Criteria. (1) The true cash value of the operating property of public utilities is its "market value," i.e., the amount of money a buyer willing but not obligated to buy would pay for such operating property from a seller willing but not obligated to sell. In arriving at a determination of such value the department may consider only those factors which can within reason be said to affect the price in negotiations between a willing purchaser and a willing seller, and the department shall consider all such factors to the extent that reliable information is available to support a judgment as to the probable effect of such factors on price.

(2) In determining the true cash value of such operating property the department shall proceed in accordance with generally accepted principles applicable to the valuation of public utilities. The department may consider the cost approach, the income approach and the stock and debt approach to value. Any one of the three approaches to value, or all of them, or a combination of approaches may finally be used in making the final determination of true cash value, depending upon the circumstances.

(A) **The cost approach.** The cost approach determines the value of individual items of property. The types of cost include:

(i) Historical - cost when first put in service

(ii) Original - cost to present owner

(iii) Reproduction - cost today to produce in kind

(iv) Replacement - cost today to replace present property with a functional equivalent.

The department shall make adequate and reasonable allowances for depreciation, including functional and economic obsolescence where such factors are indicated, but in no event shall property be depreciated below salvage or scrap value.

(B) **Income approach.** The income approach determines the ability of operating property to earn a probable money income over some span of future years, discounted to a present value by means of an appropriate capitalization rate.

(i) **Future income stream.** The income to capitalize is the probable future average annual operating income to be derived from operating properties that exist on the assessment date. In making this estimate of probable future average annual operating income, the department may take into account past earnings, present earnings, the growth or shrinking of the property complex, demand for services provided by the company, and all other factors which can within reason be said to indicate the probable future income stream.

(ii) **Capitalization rate.** The capitalization rate may be derived by the comparative method, summation method, band of investment method, or other generally accepted method. Any one of these methods, or any combination thereof, may be used by the department in deriving the appropriate capitalization rate to be applied to probable future average annual operating income.

(C) **Stock and debt approach.** The stock and debt approach determines the value of a company's assets by appraising the value of the liabilities of the company, such as current liabilities, long term debt, reserves, deferred credits, and stockholder's equity. This approach is applicably [applicable] only where a "unitary" or "enterprise" value is sought. Appropriate deductions shall be made for nonoperating property of the enterprise where necessary.

[Order PT 75-2, § 458-50-080, filed 3/19/75.]

WAC 458-50-085 Computer software—Definitions—Valuation—Centrally assessed utilities. (1) This rule implements the provisions of chapter 29, Laws of 1991, ex. sess, regarding the property taxation of computer software for centrally assessed utilities.

(2) **Computer software.** Computer software is a set of directions or instructions that exist in the form of machine-readable or human-readable code, is recorded on physical or electronic medium and directs the operation of a computer system or other machinery and/or equipment. Computer software includes the associated documentation which describes the code and/or its use, operation, and maintenance and typically is delivered with the code to the user. Computer software does not include data bases, but does include the computer programs and code which are used to generate data bases. Computer software can be canned, custom, or a mixture of both.

(a) A data base is text, data, or other information that may be accessed or managed with the aid of computer software but that does not itself have the capacity to direct the operation of a computer system or other machinery and equipment; and, therefore does not constitute computer software.

(3) **Custom software.** Custom software is computer software that is specially designed for a single person's or a small group of persons' specific needs. Custom software includes modifications to canned software and can be developed in-house by the user, by outside developers, or by both.

(4) "Person" means any individual, receiver, administrator, executor, assignee, trustee in bankruptcy, trust, estate, firm, copartnership, joint venture, club, company, joint stock company, business trust, municipal corporation, political subdivision of the state of Washington, corporation, association, society, or any group of individuals acting as a unit, whether mutual, cooperative, fraternal, nonprofit, or otherwise and the United States or any instrumentality thereof.

(5) A "small group of persons" shall consist of less than four persons. A group of four or more persons shall be presumed not to be a small group of persons for the purposes of this section unless each of the persons are affiliated through common control and ownership.

(a) "Persons affiliated through common control and ownership" means

(i) Corporations qualifying as controlled group of corporations in 26 U.S.C. § 1563; or

(ii) Partnerships or other persons in which at least 80% of the ownership in the persons claimed to be affiliated is the same.

(6) **Canned software.** Canned software, also referred to as prewritten, "shrink-wrapped" or standard software, is computer software that is designed for and distributed "as is" for multiple persons who can use it without modifying its code and which is not otherwise considered custom software.

(a) Computer software that is a combination of prewritten or standard components and components specially modified to meet the needs of a user is a mixture of canned and custom software. The standard or prewritten components are canned software and the modifications are custom software.

(b) Canned software that is "bundled" with or sold with computer hardware retains its identity as canned software and shall be valued as such. "Bundled" software is canned software that is sold with hardware and does not have a separately stated price, and can include operating systems such as DOS, UNIX, OS-2, or System 6.0 as well as other programs.

(c) An upgrade is canned software provided by the software developer, author, distributor, inventor, licensor or sublicensor to improve, enhance or correct the workings of previously purchased canned software.

(7) **Embedded software.** Embedded software is computer software that resides permanently on some internal memory device in a computer system or other machinery and equipment, that is not removable in the ordinary course of operation, and that is of a type necessary for the routine operation of the computer system or other machinery and equipment.

(a) Embedded software can be either canned or custom software which:

(i) Is an integral part of the computer system or machinery or other equipment in which it resides;

(ii) Is designed specifically to be included in or with the computer system or machinery or other equipment; and

(iii) In its absence, the computer system or machinery or other equipment is inoperable.

(b) "Not removable in the ordinary course of operation" means that the software is not readily accessible and is not intended to be removed without

(i) Terminating the computer system, machinery, or equipment's operation; or

(ii) Removal of a computer chip, circuit board, or other mechanical device, or similar item.

(c) "Necessary for the routine operation" means that the software is required for the machinery, equipment, or computer to be able to perform its intended function. In the case of machinery or other equipment, such embedded software does not have to be a physical part of the actual machinery or other equipment, but may be part of a separate control or management panel or cabinet.

(8) **Retained rights.** Retained rights are any and all rights, including intellectual property rights such as those rights arising from copyright, patent, and/or trade secret laws, that are owned or held under contract or license by a computer software developer, author, inventor, publisher or distributor, licensor or sublicensor.

(9) **Golden or master copy.** A golden or master copy of computer software is a copy of computer software from which a computer software developer, author, inventor, publisher or distributor makes copies for sale or license.

(10) **Acquisition cost.**

(a) The acquisition cost of computer software shall include the total consideration paid for the software, including money, credits, rights, or other property expressed in terms of money, actually paid or accrued. The term also includes freight and installation charges but does not include charges for modifying software, retail sales tax or training. No deduction from the acquisition cost of computer software shall be allowed for any retained rights held by the developer, author, inventor, publisher, or distributor.

(b) In cases where the acquisition cost of computer software cannot be specifically identified, it will be valued at the usual retail selling price of the same or substantially similar computer software.

(c) In cases where canned software is specially modified for the user, the canned component of the computer software retains its identity as canned software; and the modifications are considered custom software and not taxable.

(11) **Valuation of canned software.**

(a) In the first year in which it will be subject to assessment, canned software shall be listed and valued at one hundred percent of acquisition cost as defined in section (10)(a), above, regardless of whether the software has been expensed or capitalized on the accounting records of the business.

(b) In the second year in which it will be subject to assessment, canned software shall be listed at one hundred percent of acquisition cost and valued at fifty percent of its acquisition cost.

(c) After the second year in which canned software has been subject to assessment, it shall be valued at zero.

(d) Upgrades to canned software shall be listed and valued at the acquisition cost of the upgrade package under subsections (11)(a) and (b), above, and not at the value of what the complete software package would cost as a new item.

(12) **Valuation of customized canned software.** In the case where a person purchases canned software and subsequently has that canned software customized or modified in-house, by outside developers, or both, only the canned portion of such computer software shall be taxable and it shall be valued as described in subsection (11).

(13) **Valuation of embedded software.** Because embedded software is part of the computer system, machinery, or other equipment, it has no separate acquisition cost and shall not be separately valued apart from the computer system, machinery, or other equipment in which it is housed.

(14) **Taxable person.** Canned software is taxable to the person having the right to use the software, including a licensee.

(15) **Situs.** Canned and custom software with situs in Washington means software physically located in Washington or installed in or on machinery, equipment, or computer systems physically located in Washington on the assessment date.

(16) **Reporting.** Each utility/taxpayer defined in chapters 84.12 and 84.16 RCW shall report to the department, using the Annual Report tax form provided by the department, the following information regarding its software with situs in Washington in use on the assessment date:

(a) The acquisition cost of expensed canned computer software which was purchased:

(i) In the year preceding the assessment date; and

(ii) In the second year prior to the assessment date; and

(iii) In the years prior to the second year preceding the assessment date.

(b) The historic cost less depreciation of capitalized canned computer software which was purchased:

(i) In the year preceding the assessment date;

(ii) In the second year prior to the assessment date;

(iii) In the years prior to the second year preceding the assessment date;

(c) The acquisition cost of expensed custom computer software which was purchased:

(i) In the year preceding the assessment date;

(ii) In the second year prior to the assessment date;

(iii) In the years prior to the second year preceding the assessment date;

(d) The historic cost less depreciation of capitalized custom computer software.

(17) **Calculation of computer software value.** The following formulas shall be used for determining the percent taxable calculation of computer software used by centrally assessed utilities.

(a) For the purpose of determining the numerator of the percent taxable calculation, the historic cost less depreciation of all taxable Washington property shall be computed by adjusting the historic cost less depreciation of property capitalized in the company's records as follows:

(i) Add the acquisition cost of expensed canned software acquired in the year preceding the assessment date; and

(ii) Add 50% of the acquisition cost of expensed canned software acquired in the second year preceding the assessment date; and

(iii) Subtract 50% of the historic cost less depreciation of capitalized canned software acquired in the second year preceding the assessment date; and

(iv) Subtract the historic cost less depreciation of capitalized canned software acquired in years prior to the second year preceding the assessment date; and

(v) Subtract the historic cost less depreciation of capitalized custom software.

(b) For the purpose of determining the denominator of the percent taxable calculation, the historic cost less depreciation of all Washington property shall be computed by adding the acquisition cost of expensed canned and custom software in use on the assessment date to the historic cost less depreciation of Washington property capitalized in the company's records.

(c) The historic cost less depreciation of all taxable Washington property (calculated as set forth in subsection (a) above) shall be divided by the historic cost less depreciation of all Washington property (calculated as set forth in subsection (b) above) to arrive at the percent taxable calculation.

(d) The portion of the unit value allocated to Washington state shall be multiplied by the percent taxable calculated as set forth in subsection (c) above to determine the Washington taxable property value.

(18) **Exemptions.**

(a) All custom software, except embedded software, shall be exempt from property taxation;

(b) Retained rights of the computer software developer, author, inventor, publisher, distributor, licensor or sublicensor are exempt from property taxation;

(c) Modifications to canned software shall be exempt from property taxation as custom software; however, the underlying canned software shall retain its identity as canned software and shall be valued as prescribed in subsection (11) of this rule;

(d) Master or golden copies of computer software are exempt from property taxation;

(e) The taxpayer is responsible for maintaining and providing records sufficient to support any claim of exemption for either canned or custom software.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 84.08.010 and 1991 c 29. WSR 92-01-132, § 458-50-085, filed 12/19/91, effective 1/19/92.]

WAC 458-50-090 Methods of valuation. The department shall use either the summation method or "unitary" or "enterprise" method in valuing the operating property of companies. As a general rule, the unitary or enterprise method is preferred where valuing a thoroughly integrated group of properties such that removal or destruction of any one property would jeopardize and/or immobilize the entire operation of the company. The summation method is preferred where adequate information is not available to derive reliable indicators of unitary or enterprise value, and the nature of the operating property is such that it may be segregated into component parts and the value of the parts readily determined. Notwithstanding the provisions of WAC 458-50-080, the department may, in using the summation method, employ the comparable sales or "market" approach to value to the exclusion of any other approach.

[Order PT 75-2, § 458-50-090, filed 3/19/75.]

WAC 458-50-100 Apportionment of operating property to the various counties and taxing districts. In general. The department shall apportion the value of all public utility companies to the various counties in such a manner as will reasonably reflect the true cash value of the operating property located within each county and taxing district. Since it is impossible to determine with mathematical precision the precise value of each item of property located within each county and taxing district, the department shall apportion the value of operating property on the following basis:

(1) **Railroad companies -** The ratio that mileage of track, as classified by the department, situated within each county and taxing district bears to the total mileage of track within the state as of January 1 of the assessment year. In the event there exists operating property of railroad companies in counties or taxing districts not having track mileage, the department shall situs such property and apportion value directly on the basis of cost as determined in accordance with the cost approach set forth in WAC 458-50-080(A).

(2) **Pipeline companies -** The ratio that inch-equivalent of miles of pipeline situated within each county or taxing district bears to the total inch-equivalent of miles of pipeline within the state as of January 1 of the assessment year. In the event there exists operating property of pipeline companies in counties or taxing districts not having pipeline mileage, the department shall situs such property and apportion value to such county or taxing district directly on the basis of cost as determined in accordance with the cost approach set forth in WAC 458-50-080(A).

(3) **Telegraph companies -** The ratio that the cost (historical or original) of operating property situated within each county and taxing district bears to the cost (historical or original) of all operating property within the state as of January 1 of the assessment year.

(4) **Telephone companies -** The ratio that the cost (historical or original) of operating property situated within each county or taxing district bears to the total cost (historical or original) of all operating property within the state as of January 1 of the assessment year.

(5) **Electric light and power companies -** The ratio that cost (historical or original) of operating property situated within each county and taxing district bears to the total cost (historical or original) of all operating property within the state as of January 1 of the assessment year.

(6) **Gas companies -** The ratio that cost (historical or original) of operating property situated within each county and taxing district bears to the total cost (historical or original) of all operating property within the state as of January 1 of the assessment year: Provided, The value of pipeline shall be allocated on the basis of the ratio that inch-equivalent of miles of pipeline situated within each county or taxing district bears to the total inch-equivalent of miles of pipeline within the state as of January 1 of the assessment year.

(7) **Airplane companies -** The ratio that cost (historical or original) of operating property situated within each county and taxing district bears to the total cost (historical or origi-

nal) of operating property within the state as of January 1 of the assessment year: Provided, That the value of aircraft shall be apportioned on the basis of the ratio that landings and take-offs of such aircraft within each county and taxing district bears to the total landings and take-offs within the state during the previous calendar year.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 84.12.390. WSR 06-05-034, § 458-50-100, filed 2/8/06, effective 3/11/06; WSR 88-02-009 (Order PT 87-9), § 458-50-100, filed 12/28/87; Order PT 75-2, § 458-50-100, filed 3/19/75.]

WAC 458-50-110 Apportionment reports. (1) On or before April 15 of each year the department shall furnish taxing district maps and report forms (hereinafter referred to as "apportionment reports") to each railroad, pipeline, telegraph, telephone, electric light and power, and gas company.

(2) Each company furnished an apportionment report shall complete and submit such report to the department on or before June 1 of the assessment year. Since all apportionment reports must be in the department's hands by June 1 in order to permit adequate opportunity to properly apportion operating property in accordance with WAC 458-50-100, an extension of time for filing such reports will be granted only upon a showing of undue hardship.

[Order PT 75-2, § 458-50-110, filed 3/19/75.]

WAC 458-50-120 Notification of real estate transfers. Each company shall notify the department of any transfer of title, use or occupancy of operating property consisting of real property, whether such transfer is to or from such company. Such notification shall contain the legal description of the property, date of transfer, and name and address of transferor and transferee. For purposes of this rule, it shall be sufficient to transmit a copy of the deed, real estate contract, or lease (as the case may be) to the department. Such notification shall be made within ninety days of the effective date of such transfer.

[Order PT 75-2, § 458-50-120, filed 3/19/75.]

WAC 458-50-130 Taxing district boundary changes—Estoppel. (1) In accordance with RCW 84.09.030 and WAC 458-12-140, the county assessor is required on or before March 1 to transmit certain documents and maps setting forth taxing district boundary changes to the department of revenue, property tax division.

(2) The department shall prepare taxing district maps based upon information submitted to it on or before March 1. Such maps shall be used to fix taxing district boundaries for purposes of apportioning the operating property of each company among the various counties and taxing districts. Any county or taxing district not having submitted the documents and maps as required by WAC 458-12-140 shall be estopped from questioning the validity of any apportionment of value to it as determined by the department to the extent that such challenge is based upon taxing district boundaries different than as shown on the department's maps.

[Order PT 75-2, § 458-50-130, filed 3/19/75.]

WAC 458-50-150 Intangible personal property exemption—Introduction. (1) **Goal of these rules relative to exemption of intangible personal property.** Although the Washington Constitution allows for property taxation of all property subject to ownership, "whether tangible or intangible," the legislature has exempted some intangible property from property taxation for many years. In 1997, the legislature expanded the property tax exemption for intangible personal property and provided examples of exempt property. The following rules are intended to provide additional clarification of the statute and provide guidelines to be used by assessing officials in determining the taxable value of property. The goal is to ensure, in as fair and equitable a manner as possible, that all taxable property is assessed and all nontaxable property is not assessed.

(2) **Application of these rules.** These rules primarily implement RCW 84.36.070, which establishes a property tax exemption for intangible personal property, but also apply to chapters 84.12 and 84.16 RCW, the statutory chapters dealing with the assessment of public utility, and private car company property, respectively, by the state, and to chapter 84.40 RCW, which deals with assessment of property by the county assessor.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 84.08.010, 84.08.070, and 84.36.865. WSR 06-24-043, § 458-50-150, filed 11/30/06, effective 12/31/06.]

WAC 458-50-160 Exempt intangible property distinguished from other intangibles. (1) **Distinction between property, and characteristics or attributes of property.** The statute (RCW 84.36.070) draws a distinction between intangible personal property and the characteristics or attributes of property, both real and personal. Intangible personal property is exempt from property taxation. However, some characteristics or attributes of property, even though intangible, may be considered in establishing the taxable value of tangible property.

(2) **What intangible personal property is exempt?** The listings of examples of intangible personal property contained in RCW 84.36.070(2) must be consulted, but those listings can be summarized as follows:

(a) Financial intangible property, such as moneys, credits, and publicly issued bonds and warrants, and the bonds, stocks, or shares of private corporations;

(b) Private personal service contracts and athletic or sports franchises, or sports agreements that do not pertain to the use or possession or any interest in tangible personal or real property; and

(c) Miscellaneous types of intangible personal property, such as trademarks, trade names, brand names, patents, copyrights, trade secrets, franchise agreements, licenses, permits, core deposits of financial institutions, noncompete agreements, customer lists, patient lists, favorable contracts, favorable financing agreements, reputation, exceptional management, prestige, good name, integrity of a business, and other similar types of intangible personal property.

(3) **Identifying exempt intangible personal property.** Intangible property is only exempt if it is personal property capable of being individually owned, used, transferred, or held separately from other property. The market value of separate items of intangible personal property should not be identified or characterized solely using residual accounting methods, or other indirect techniques, such as isolating "excess earnings," from a total business valuation. Market value of exempt intangible personal property should be veri-

fiable, to the extent possible, in an openly traded market where the value of comparable intangible properties can be observed and considered. Intangible assets that are separately identified and valued in reports filed with any state or federal regulatory agency, may be considered when identifying and valuing intangible personal property of the types listed in subsection (2)(c) of this section.

(4) **What intangible characteristics, attributes or other factors affect value and may be considered?** Non-property intangible characteristics or attributes are elements or components of value associated with a real or tangible asset. These characteristics or attributes are "intangible" but they are not "property" and therefore are not tax exempt intangible personal property. They are contingent and dependent upon other property and cannot be owned, used, transferred, or held separately from other property. To the extent that these characteristics, attributes, or other factors contribute to, or affect, the value of property, they must be appropriately considered when determining taxable value. They include the following types:

(a) Zoning, location, view, geographic features, easements, covenants, proximity to raw materials, condition of surrounding property, proximity to markets, or the availability of a skilled work force;

(b) Grants of licenses, permits, and franchises by a government agency that affect the use of the property being valued; and

(c) Other characteristics of property, such as scarcity, uniqueness, adaptability, or utility as an integrated unit.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 84.08.010, 84.08.070, and 84.36.865. WSR 06-24-043, § 458-50-160, filed 11/30/06, effective 12/31/06.]

WAC 458-50-170 Valuation principles. (1) **What is meant by "true and fair value"?** One hundred percent of true and fair value is the standard used by assessing officials for valuing both taxable property and exempt property. True and fair value is the same as market value or fair market value. It is the amount of money a buyer of property willing but not obligated to buy would pay a seller of property willing but not obligated to sell, taking into consideration all uses to which the property is adapted and might in reason be applied. This term incorporates all the rights and benefits, present and future, associated with the ownership of property.

(2) **Approaches to value.** All three traditional and generally accepted approaches to value may be used by assessing officials. These approaches are cost, including the actual cost new or historical cost less depreciation, the cost of reproduction new less any depreciation, the cost of replacement new less any depreciation; income, including the past, present, and prospective gross and net earnings of the whole system as a unit; and comparable sales (commonly called "market"), including, but not limited to, a technique known as the stock and debt method that considers the par value, actual value and market value of the company's outstanding stocks and bonds during one or more preceding years.

(3) **Generally accepted appraisal practices.** "Generally accepted appraisal practices" are the appropriate application in the valuation of real, and tangible and intangible personal property, of accepted standards of professional appraisal practice as described in the Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice issued by the Appraisal Standards Board of the Appraisal Foundation or the accepted standards of other nationally recognized professional appraisal organizations.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 84.08.010, 84.08.070, and 84.36.865. WSR 06-24-043, § 458-50-170, filed 11/30/06, effective 12/31/06.]

WAC 458-50-180 Appraisal practices relating to valuing intangible personal property. (1) **Unit valuation.** Unit valuation is a method of determining the market value of a company, business, or property as a whole without reference to individual parts or components. For example, a railroad company may have many miles of track, or a pipeline company may have many miles of pipe, but if the track or the pipe is not connected in a useful and interdependent way to the rest of the company's system as a whole, the track or the pipe have considerably less value. However, when all the interdependent assets of a company are working together and functioning synergistically as a unit, the value of the company as a whole is independent of the value of the component parts. Similarly, the roof or the walls of a house may have value independently of the structure as a whole, but the market value of the house, for purposes of taxation, is determined as a unit. Market value is the value of the unit as a whole, not a summation of fractional appraisals of the component parts. The unit value may have enhanced taxable value above, taxable value equal to, or taxable value lower than what the sum of the value of the component parts may indicate. The department is specifically authorized to take into consideration, among other things, "the value of the whole system as a unit," when valuing companies with operating property in more than one county or more than one state. (RCW 84.12.300; *see also* RCW 84.16.050.)

(2) **Situs, allocation, and apportionment.** Property taxes may only be levied upon property having situs in this state, in other words, upon property located in this state. The process of dividing up the unit value of a company among the states where it has a presence is called allocation. The process of dividing up the allocated state value among the taxing jurisdictions within a state is called apportionment. Once the taxable value, meaning the total value of a company's operating property in this state less the exempt value, has been determined, the taxable value is apportioned as required by law.

(3) **Valuation of exempt intangible personal property.** Assessing officials may use one of two methods, as appropriate, to determine the value of intangible personal property that is exempted from a company's unit value. The first method is the method by which the true and fair value of the exempt intangible personal property is deducted from the true and fair value of the operating property at the system level to arrive at taxable value at the system or entity level. The second method is the method by which the true and fair value of exempt intangible personal property is excluded from the value of the operating property at the system level by using a valuation model that approximates the value of the nonexempt assets only. These two methods are explained in more detail as follows.

(a) The first method is a two-step process that involves valuing the entire company operation, the unit, as the first step, using any or a combination of the three traditional approaches to value. Then the exempt property is separately

identified, valued, and deducted from the unit value. In valuing the exempt property, assessing officials use generally accepted appraisal practices, including sales of similar intangible personal property, capitalization rates obtained through those sales, or by identifying cash flows attributable to each intangible personal property asset. When using this method, the value resulting from deducting the exempt value of intangible personal property from the entire company value, is the taxable value at the system or entity level. From that value, the proper value must then be allocated to this state and apportioned to the local taxing jurisdictions by law.

(b) The second method involves an appraisal process using an appraisal model that intrinsically approximates the exclusion of exempt intangible value. This process assumes the existence of intangible personal property in the overall value of the company being valued, but does not specifically identify or value individual intangible personal property assets. Although the model may not actually exclude the value of exempt intangible personal property, it simulates the effect of exempting intangible personal property by producing a lower assessed value equivalent to the exclusion of exempt intangible property.

(4) **Unit value at the county level.** When a business operates in more than one location within a county, but is physically, economically, and functionally integrated, it may also be valued by the assessor as a unit. However, properties that share a name, for example, but are independently operated, such as bank branches, retail outlets, radio stations, or hotels or motels that are part of a chain, should generally be valued as stand-alone enterprises, and not as physically, economically, and functionally integrated units. An assessor should consider the unit being assessed to be the same unit a typical purchaser would consider in an openly traded market. If the property being assessed would typically be purchased as a stand-alone and independent operation without reference to a larger entity, then that is how it should be assessed. If the property being assessed would typically be included in the purchase of a larger entity, then the assessor should consider the influence on value that being included within the larger unit would have on the property being assessed.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 84.08.010, 84.08.070, and 84.36.865. WSR 06-24-043, § 458-50-180, filed 11/30/06, effective 12/31/06.]

WAC 458-50-190 Valuation of particular assets. (1) **Computer software.** Computer software is generally exempt from property taxation. The exemption is specifically dealt with in RCW 84.36.600 (exemption), RCW 84.04.150 (definitions), and WAC 458-12-251. Computer software and embedded software is valued in accordance with RCW 84.40.037. RCW 84.36.070 and these rules (WAC 458-50-150 through 458-50-190) do not apply to computer software, and nothing in that statute or these rules may be construed to amend or modify that existing statute and the rule dealing with the property tax treatment of computer software.

(2) In valuing low income or other housing which qualifies for federal income tax credits, those tax credits are exempt from property taxation to the extent that they are transferable separate and apart from any interest in the housing property.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 84.08.010, 84.08.070, and 84.36.865. WSR 06-24-043, § 458-50-190, filed 11/30/06, effective 12/31/06.]