

**Letter of Findings Number: 05-0423P**  
**Sales and Use Tax**  
**For Periods Ending March 31, 2005 and April 30, 2005**

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**ISSUE**

**I. Tax Administration- Ten Percent (10%) Negligence Penalty**

**Authority:** [IC 6-8.1-10-2.1](#), [45 IAC 15-11-2](#) (b)(c).

The taxpayer protests the imposition of the ten percent (10%) negligence penalty.

**STATEMENT OF FACTS**

The taxpayer provides design, engineering, manufacturing, packaging and distribution of window assemblies. The taxpayer received a letter stating that they were to file annual return. The taxpayer files both withholding and sales tax returns with the department. The Indiana Department of Revenue "department," assessed penalty on the sales tax returns for late payment for two months. The taxpayer protested the imposition of the ten percent (10%) negligence penalty.

**I. Tax Administration- Ten Percent (10%) Negligence Penalty**

**DISCUSSION**

The taxpayer protests the imposition of the ten percent (10%) negligence penalty pursuant to [IC 6-8.1-10-2.1](#). Indiana Regulation [45 IAC 15-11-2](#) (b) clarifies the standard for the imposition of the negligence penalty as follows:

Negligence, on behalf of a taxpayer is defined as the failure to use such reasonable care, caution, or diligence as would be expected of an ordinary reasonable taxpayer. Negligence would result from a taxpayer's carelessness, thoughtlessness, disregard or inattention to duties placed upon the taxpayer by the Indiana Code or department regulations. Ignorance of the listed tax laws, rules and/or regulations is treated as negligence. Further, failure to read and follow instructions provided by the department is treated as negligence. Negligence shall be determined on a case by case basis according to the facts and circumstances of each taxpayer.

The standard for waiving the negligence penalty is given at [45 IAC 15-11-2](#) (c) as follows:

The department shall waive the negligence penalty imposed under [IC 6-8.1-10-1](#) if the taxpayer affirmatively establishes that the failure to file a return, pay the full amount of tax due, timely remit tax held in trust, or pay a deficiency was due to reasonable cause and not due to negligence. In order to establish reasonable cause, the taxpayer must demonstrate that it exercised ordinary business care and prudence in carrying out or failing to carry out a duty giving rise to the penalty imposed under this section. Factors which may be considered in determining reasonable cause include, but are not limited to:

- (1) the nature of the tax involved;
- (2) judicial precedents set by Indiana courts;
- (3) judicial precedents established in jurisdictions outside Indiana;
- (4) published department instructions, information bulletins, letters of findings, rulings, letters of advice, etc;
- (5) previous audits or letters of findings concerning the issue and taxpayer involved in the penalty assessment.

Reasonable cause is a fact sensitive question and thus will be dealt with according to the particular facts and circumstances of each case.

The taxpayer provided substantial documentation to indicate that its failure to pay the sales/use tax in a timely manner was due to reasonable cause rather than negligence.

**FINDING**

The taxpayer's protest is sustained.

*Posted: 08/30/2006 by Legislative Services Agency*  
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