

Letter of Findings Number: 06-0370P  
Sales and Use Tax  
For the Years 2003-2005

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**ISSUE**

**I. Tax Administration- Ten Percent 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 negligence penalty.

**STATEMENT OF FACTS**

The taxpayer is a corporation in the business of sales, service, lease, and rental of heavy construction equipment. After an audit, the Indiana Department of Revenue, hereinafter referred to as the "department," assessed additional use tax, interest, and penalty. The taxpayer paid the tax assessments and protested the imposition of the ten percent negligence penalty.

**I. Tax Administration- Ten Percent Negligence Penalty**

**DISCUSSION**

The taxpayer protests the imposition of the ten percent 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 argued that its mistakes resulting in additional tax liability were not a result of negligence. Rather, the additional tax liabilities resulted from simple employee mistakes.

These mistakes resulted from the taxpayer's employees' carelessness and inattention to detail. These breaches of the taxpayer's duty to properly pay all tax liabilities constitute negligence.

**FINDING**

The taxpayer's protest is respectfully denied.

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