

Letter of Findings Number: 10-0007P
Withholding Tax-Penalty
For the Tax Year 2008

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ISSUE

I. Tax Administration—Penalty.

Authority: IC § 6-3-4-8; IC § 6-8.1-5-1; IC § 6-8.1-10-2.1; [45 IAC 15-11-2](#).

Taxpayer protests the imposition of the penalty for failure to file withholding tax returns and remitting amounts due.

STATEMENT OF FACTS

Taxpayer is a corporation. Taxpayer did not file withholding tax returns in a timely manner for five consecutive months in 2008. Because the returns were late, Taxpayer was assessed a penalty.

The Department sent a letter to Taxpayer stating that Taxpayer could request a hearing by replying to the letter within twenty (20) days of the letter. Taxpayer did not reply to the Department's letter. Due to Taxpayer's failure to reply, this Letter of Findings is written based on the information in Taxpayer's protest file and other Department records relating to Taxpayer.

I. Tax Administration—Penalty.

DISCUSSION

Taxpayer protests the imposition of a penalty for failure to file tax returns in a timely manner. Taxpayer asserts that it contracted with a third party to file returns and deposit withholding taxes on behalf of taxpayer.

IC § 6-3-4-8(a) requires every employer making payments of wages subject to tax under IC § 6-3 to "deduct and retain therefrom the amount prescribed in withholding instructions issued by the department."

Such employer making payments of any wages:

- (1) shall be liable to the state of Indiana for the payment of the tax required to be deducted and withheld under this section and shall not be liable to any individual for the amount deducted from the individual's wages and paid over in compliance or intended compliance with this section; and
- (2) shall make return of and payment to the department monthly of the amount of tax which under this article and [IC 6-3.5](#) the employer is required to withhold.

IC § 6-3-4-8(a).

IC § 6-3-4-8(g) states that:

provisions of [IC 6-8.1](#) relating to additions to tax in case of delinquency and penalties shall apply to employers subject to the provisions of this section, and for these purposes **any amount deducted or required to be deducted and remitted to the department under this section shall be considered to be the tax of the employer, and with respect to such amount the employer shall be considered the taxpayer.** In the case of a corporate or partnership employer, every officer, employee, or member of such employer, who, as such officer, employee, or member is under a duty to deduct and remit such taxes shall be personally liable for such taxes, penalties, and interest. (**Emphasis added**).

Referring to IC § 6-8.1-10-2.1(a) if a person:

- (1) fails to file a return for any of the listed taxes;
- (2) fails to pay the full amount of tax shown on the person's return on or before the due date for the return or payment;
- (3) incurs, upon examination by the department, a deficiency that is due to negligence;
- (4) fails to timely remit any tax held in trust for the state; or
- (5) is required to make a payment by electronic funds transfer (as defined in [IC 4-8.1-2-7](#)), overnight courier, or personal delivery and the payment is not received by the department by the due date in funds acceptable to the department;

the person is subject to a penalty.

(b) Except as provided in subsection (g), the penalty described in subsection (a) is ten percent (10[percent]) of:

- (1) the full amount of the tax due if the person failed to file the return;
- (2) the amount of the tax not paid, if the person filed the return but failed to pay the full amount of the tax shown on the return;
- (3) the amount of the tax held in trust that is not timely remitted;
- (4) the amount of deficiency as finally determined by the department; or
- (5) the amount of tax due if a person failed to make payment by electronic funds transfer, overnight courier,

or personal delivery by the due date.

Penalty waiver is permitted if the taxpayer shows that the failure to pay the full amount of the tax was due to reasonable cause and not due to willful neglect. IC § 6-8.1-10-2.1(d). The Indiana Administrative Code, [45 IAC 15-11-2](#) further provides:

(b) "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.

(c) The department shall waive the negligence penalty imposed under [\[IC 6-8.1-10-2.1\]](#) 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.

In this case, the Department determined that Taxpayer's failure to timely file returns and remit withholding tax amounts were due to negligence under [45 IAC 15-11-2\(b\)](#), and were subject to a penalty under IC § 6-8.1-10-2.1(a). Within its request, Taxpayer argues that fault for its failure resides with the third party contractor. The Department's review of taxpayer's history, however, indicates that taxpayer failed to timely file returns and remit taxes due on multiple occasions.

Under IC § 6-8.1-5-1(c) "[t]he burden of proving that the proposed assessment is wrong rests with the person against whom the proposed assessment is made." Taxpayer has not affirmatively established that its failure to timely file returns and remit withholding tax amounts was due to reasonable cause and not due to negligence, as required by [45 IAC 15-11-2\(c\)](#).

FINDING

Taxpayer's protest is respectfully denied.

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