

**Letter of Findings: 40-20150443P**  
**Negligence Penalty**  
**For Tax Period June 20, 2014**

**NOTICE:** IC § 6-8.1-3-3.5 and IC § 4-22-7-7 require the publication of this document in the Indiana Register. This document provides the general public with information about the Department's official position concerning a specific set of facts and issues. This document is effective on its date of publication and remains in effect until the date it is superseded or deleted by the publication of another document in the Indiana Register. The "Holding" section of this document is provided for the convenience of the reader and is not part of the analysis contained in this Letter of Findings.

**HOLDING**

Public utility provided sufficient documentation to support its abatement request.

**ISSUE**

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

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

Taxpayer requests that the Department abate the negligence penalty.

**STATEMENT OF FACTS**

Taxpayer is a public utility selling and distributing electricity to local customers in Indiana. Taxpayer is required to make quarterly estimated utility receipts tax payments to the Indiana Department of Revenue ("Department"). For the tax period June 2014, Taxpayer did not timely remit the estimated payment on or before the required due date. As a result, the Department imposed a late penalty.

Taxpayer paid the penalty under protest; it requested that the Department abate the negligence penalty. A hearing was held and this Letter of Findings results. Additional facts will be provided as necessary.

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

**DISCUSSION**

The Department imposed a ten percent negligence penalty because Taxpayer failed to timely remit the quarterly estimated payment. Taxpayer requested that the Department abate the negligence penalty.

Pursuant to IC § 6-8.1-10-2.1(a), the Department may assess a ten (10) percent negligence penalty if the taxpayer:

- (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[.]

[45 IAC 15-11-2](#)(b) further states:

"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 Department may waive a negligence penalty as provided in [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.

In this instance, Taxpayer requested that the Department abate the negligence penalty for various reasons. Specifically, after a review of the Department's records, Taxpayer overall maintains a good compliance history and the duration of the delay is negligible. Taxpayer also documents that it has changed its internal procedure to ensure this error will not occur again going forward. The Department thus agrees that Taxpayer provided sufficient documentation to demonstrate that the negligence penalty should be abated. Since Taxpayer paid the penalty under protest, the payment will be refunded.

#### **FINDING**

Taxpayer's protest of the imposition of negligence penalty is sustained.

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