

## **RCW 4.24.550**

### **Sex offenders and kidnapping offenders—Release of information to public—Web site.**

\*\*\* CHANGE IN 2015 \*\*\* (SEE 5154-S.SL) \*\*\*

(1) In addition to the disclosure under subsection (5) of this section, public agencies are authorized to release information to the public regarding sex offenders and kidnapping offenders when the agency determines that disclosure of the information is relevant and necessary to protect the public and counteract the danger created by the particular offender. This authorization applies to information regarding: (a) Any person adjudicated or convicted of a sex offense as defined in RCW 9A.44.128 or a kidnapping offense as defined by RCW 9A.44.128; (b) any person under the jurisdiction of the indeterminate sentence review board as the result of a sex offense or kidnapping offense; (c) any person committed as a sexually violent predator under chapter 71.09 RCW or as a sexual psychopath under chapter 71.06 RCW; (d) any person found not guilty of a sex offense or kidnapping offense by reason of insanity under chapter 10.77 RCW; and (e) any person found incompetent to stand trial for a sex offense or kidnapping offense and subsequently committed under chapter 71.05 or 71.34 RCW.

(2) Except for the information specifically required under subsection (5) of this section, the extent of the public disclosure of relevant and necessary information shall be rationally related to: (a) The level of risk posed by the offender to the community; (b) the locations where the offender resides, expects to reside, or is regularly found; and (c) the needs of the affected community members for information to enhance their individual and collective safety.

(3) Except for the information specifically required under subsection (5) of this section, local law enforcement agencies shall consider the following guidelines in determining the extent of a public disclosure made under this section: (a) For offenders classified as risk level I, the agency shall share information with other appropriate law enforcement agencies and, if the offender is a student, the public or private school regulated under Title 28A RCW or chapter 72.40 RCW which the offender is attending, or planning to attend. The agency may disclose, upon request, relevant, necessary, and accurate information to any victim or witness to the offense and to any individual community member who lives near the residence where the offender resides, expects to reside, or is regularly found; (b) for offenders classified as risk level II, the agency may also disclose relevant, necessary, and accurate information to public and private schools, child day care centers, family day care providers, public libraries, businesses and organizations that serve primarily children, women, or vulnerable adults, and neighbors and community groups near the residence where the offender resides, expects to reside, or is regularly found; (c) for offenders classified as risk level III, the agency may also disclose relevant, necessary, and accurate information to the public at large; and (d) because more localized notification is not feasible and homeless and transient offenders may present unique risks to the community, the agency may also disclose relevant, necessary, and accurate information to the public at large for offenders registered as homeless or transient.

(4) The county sheriff with whom an offender classified as risk level III is registered shall cause to be published by legal notice, advertising, or news release a sex offender community notification that conforms to the guidelines established under RCW 4.24.5501 in at least one legal newspaper with general circulation in the area of the sex offender's registered address or location. Unless the information is posted on the web site described in subsection (5) of this section, this list shall be maintained by the county sheriff on a publicly accessible web site and shall be updated at least once per month.

(5)(a) When funded by federal grants or other sources, the Washington association of sheriffs and police chiefs shall create and maintain a statewide registered kidnapping and sex offender web site, which shall be available to the public. The web site shall post all level III and level II registered sex offenders, level I registered sex offenders during the time they are out of compliance with registration requirements under RCW 9A.44.130, and all registered kidnapping offenders in the state of Washington.

(i) For level III offenders, the web site shall contain, but is not limited to, the registered sex offender's name, relevant criminal convictions, address by hundred block, physical description, and photograph. The web site shall provide mapping capabilities that display the sex offender's address by hundred block on a map. The web site shall allow citizens to search for registered sex offenders within the state of Washington by county, city, zip code, last name, and address by hundred block.

(ii) For level II offenders, and level I sex offenders during the time they are out of compliance with registration requirements under RCW 9A.44.130, the web site shall contain, but is not limited to, the same information and functionality as described in (a)(i) of this subsection, provided that it is permissible under state and federal law. If it is not permissible, the web site shall be limited to the information and functionality that is permissible under state and federal law.

(iii) For kidnapping offenders, the web site shall contain, but is not limited to, the same information and functionality as described in (a)(i) of this subsection, provided that it is permissible under state and federal law. If it is not permissible, the web site shall be limited to the information and functionality that is permissible under state and federal law.

(b) Until the implementation of (a) of this subsection, the Washington association of sheriffs and police chiefs shall create a web site available to the public that provides electronic links to county-operated web sites that offer sex offender registration information.

(6) Local law enforcement agencies that disseminate information pursuant to this section shall: (a) Review available risk level classifications made by the department of corrections, the department of social and health services, and the indeterminate sentence review board; (b) assign risk level classifications to all offenders about whom information will be disseminated; and (c) make a good faith effort to notify the public and residents within a reasonable period of time after the offender registers with the agency. The juvenile court shall provide local law enforcement officials with all relevant information on offenders allowed to remain in the community in a timely manner.

(7) An appointed or elected public official, public employee, or public agency as defined in RCW 4.24.470, or units of local government and its employees, as provided in RCW 36.28A.010, are immune from civil liability for damages for any discretionary risk level classification decisions or release of relevant and necessary information, unless it is shown that the official, employee, or agency acted with gross negligence or in bad faith. The immunity in this section applies to risk level classification decisions and the release of relevant and necessary information regarding any individual for whom disclosure is authorized. The decision of a local law enforcement agency or official to classify an offender to a risk level other than the one assigned by the department of corrections, the department of social and health services, or the indeterminate sentence review board, or the release of any relevant and necessary information based on that different classification shall not, by itself, be considered gross negligence or bad faith. The immunity provided under this section applies to the release of relevant and necessary information to other public officials, public employees, or public agencies, and to the general public.

(8) Except as may otherwise be provided by law, nothing in this section shall impose any liability upon a public official, public employee, or public agency for failing to release information authorized under this section.

(9) Nothing in this section implies that information regarding persons designated in subsection (1) of this section is confidential except as may otherwise be provided by law.

(10) When a local law enforcement agency or official classifies an offender differently than the offender is classified by the end of sentence review committee or the department of social and health services at the time of the offender's release from confinement, the law enforcement agency or official shall notify the end of sentence review committee or the department of social and health services and submit its reasons supporting the change in classification. [2011 c 337 § 1; 2008 c 98 § 1. Prior: 2005 c 380 § 2; 2005 c 228 § 1; 2005 c 99 § 1; 2003 c 217 § 1; 2002 c 118 § 1; prior: 2001 c 283 § 2; 2001 c 169 § 2; 1998 c 220 § 6; prior: 1997 c 364 § 1; 1997 c 113 § 2; 1996 c 215 § 1; 1994 c 129 § 2; 1990 c 3 § 117.]

[2011 c 337 § 1; 2008 c 98 § 1. Prior: 2005 c 380 § 2; 2005 c 228 § 1; 2005 c 99 § 1; 2003 c 217 § 1; 2002 c 118 § 1; prior: 2001 c 283 § 2; 2001 c 169 § 2; 1998 c 220 § 6; prior: 1997 c 364 § 1; 1997 c 113 § 2; 1996 c 215 § 1; 1994 c 129 § 2; 1990 c 3 § 117.]

**NOTES:**

**Effective date—2005 c 380:** See note following RCW 9A.44.130.

**Conflict with federal requirements—2002 c 118:** "If any provision of this act or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid due to a conflict with federal law, the conflicting part of this act is inoperative solely to the extent of the conflict, and such holding does not affect the operation of the remainder of this act or the application of the provision to other persons or circumstances." [2002 c 118 § 3.]

**Severability—1998 c 220:** See note following RCW 9A.44.130.

**Severability—1997 c 364:** "If any provision of this act or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of the act or the application of the provision to other persons or circumstances is not affected." [1997 c 364 § 9.]

**Findings—1997 c 113:** "The legislature finds that offenders who commit kidnapping offenses against minor children pose a substantial threat to the well-being of our communities. Child victims are especially vulnerable and unable to protect themselves. The legislature further finds that requiring sex offenders to register has assisted law enforcement agencies in protecting their communities. Similar registration requirements for offenders who have kidnapped or unlawfully imprisoned a child would also assist law enforcement agencies in protecting the children in their communities from further victimization." [1997 c 113 § 1.]

**Findings—Intent—1994 c 129:** "The legislature finds that members of the public may be alarmed when law enforcement officers notify them that a sex offender who is about to be released from custody will live in or near their neighborhood. The legislature also finds that if the public is provided adequate notice and information, the community can develop constructive plans to prepare themselves and their children for the offender's release. A sufficient time period allows communities to meet with law enforcement to discuss and prepare for the release, to establish block watches, to obtain information about the rights and responsibilities of the community and the offender, and to provide education and counseling to their children. Therefore, the legislature intends that when law enforcement officials decide to notify the public about a sex offender's pending release that notice be given at least fourteen days before the offender's release whenever possible." [1994 c 129 § 1.]

**Finding—Policy—1990 c 3 § 117:** "The legislature finds that sex offenders pose a high risk of engaging in sex offenses even after being released from incarceration or commitment and that protection of the public from sex offenders is a paramount governmental interest. The legislature further finds that the penal and mental health components of our justice system are largely hidden from public view and that lack of information from either may result in failure of both systems to meet this paramount concern of public safety. Overly restrictive confidentiality and liability laws governing the release of information about sexual predators have reduced willingness to release information that could be appropriately released under the public disclosure laws, and have increased risks to public safety. Persons found to have committed a sex offense have a reduced expectation of privacy because of the public's interest in public safety and in the effective operation of government. Release of information about sexual predators to public agencies and under limited circumstances, the general public, will further the governmental interests of public safety and public scrutiny of the criminal and mental health systems so long as the information released is rationally related to the furtherance of those goals.

Therefore, this state's policy as expressed in RCW 4.24.550 is to require the exchange of relevant information about sexual predators among public agencies and officials and to authorize the release of necessary and relevant information about sexual predators to members of the general public." [1990 c 3 § 116.]

**Index, part headings not law—Severability—Effective dates—Application—1990 c 3:** See RCW 18.155.900 through 18.155.902.

*Release of information regarding*

*convicted sex offenders: RCW 9.94A.846.*

*juveniles found to have committed sex offenses: RCW 13.40.217.*

*persons in custody of department of social and health services: RCW 10.77.207, 71.06.135, 71.09.120.*



**RCW 42.56.520****Prompt responses required.**

Responses to requests for public records shall be made promptly by agencies, the office of the secretary of the senate, and the office of the chief clerk of the house of representatives. Within five business days of receiving a public record request, an agency, the office of the secretary of the senate, or the office of the chief clerk of the house of representatives must respond by either (1) providing the record; (2) providing an internet address and link on the agency's web site to the specific records requested, except that if the requester notifies the agency that he or she cannot access the records through the internet, then the agency must provide copies of the record or allow the requester to view copies using an agency computer; (3) acknowledging that the agency, the office of the secretary of the senate, or the office of the chief clerk of the house of representatives has received the request and providing a reasonable estimate of the time the agency, the office of the secretary of the senate, or the office of the chief clerk of the house of representatives will require to respond to the request; or (4) denying the public record request. Additional time required to respond to a request may be based upon the need to clarify the intent of the request, to locate and assemble the information requested, to notify third persons or agencies affected by the request, or to determine whether any of the information requested is exempt and that a denial should be made as to all or part of the request. In acknowledging receipt of a public record request that is unclear, an agency, the office of the secretary of the senate, or the office of the chief clerk of the house of representatives may ask the requestor to clarify what information the requestor is seeking. If the requestor fails to clarify the request, the agency, the office of the secretary of the senate, or the office of the chief clerk of the house of representatives need not respond to it. Denials of requests must be accompanied by a written statement of the specific reasons therefor. Agencies, the office of the secretary of the senate, and the office of the chief clerk of the house of representatives shall establish mechanisms for the most prompt possible review of decisions denying inspection, and such review shall be deemed completed at the end of the second business day following the denial of inspection and shall constitute final agency action or final action by the office of the secretary of the senate or the office of the chief clerk of the house of representatives for the purposes of judicial review.

[2010 c 69 § 2; 1995 c 397 § 15; 1992 c 139 § 6; 1975 1st ex.s. c 294 § 18; 1973 c 1 § 32 (Initiative Measure No. 276, approved November 7, 1972). Formerly RCW 42.17.320.]

**Notes:**

**Finding -- 2010 c 69:** "The internet provides for instant access to public records at a significantly reduced cost to the agency and the public. Agencies are encouraged to make commonly requested records available on agency web sites. When an agency has made records available on its web site, members of the public with computer access should be encouraged to preserve taxpayer resources by accessing those records online." [2010 c 69 § 1.]



**RCW 42.56.030**  
**Construction.**

The people of this state do not yield their sovereignty to the agencies that serve them. The people, in delegating authority, do not give their public servants the right to decide what is good for the people to know and what is not good for them to know. The people insist on remaining informed so that they may maintain control over the instruments that they have created. This chapter shall be liberally construed and its exemptions narrowly construed to promote this public policy and to assure that the public interest will be fully protected. In the event of conflict between the provisions of this chapter and any other act, the provisions of this chapter shall govern.

[2007 c 197 § 2; 2005 c 274 § 283; 1992 c 139 § 2. Formerly RCW 42.17.251.]



**RCW 42.56.070****Documents and indexes to be made public.**

(1) Each agency, in accordance with published rules, shall make available for public inspection and copying all public records, unless the record falls within the specific exemptions of \*subsection (6) of this section, this chapter, or other statute which exempts or prohibits disclosure of specific information or records. To the extent required to prevent an unreasonable invasion of personal privacy interests protected by this chapter, an agency shall delete identifying details in a manner consistent with this chapter when it makes available or publishes any public record; however, in each case, the justification for the deletion shall be explained fully in writing.

(2) For informational purposes, each agency shall publish and maintain a current list containing every law, other than those listed in this chapter, that the agency believes exempts or prohibits disclosure of specific information or records of the agency. An agency's failure to list an exemption shall not affect the efficacy of any exemption.

(3) Each local agency shall maintain and make available for public inspection and copying a current index providing identifying information as to the following records issued, adopted, or promulgated after January 1, 1973:

(a) Final opinions, including concurring and dissenting opinions, as well as orders, made in the adjudication of cases;

(b) Those statements of policy and interpretations of policy, statute, and the Constitution which have been adopted by the agency;

(c) Administrative staff manuals and instructions to staff that affect a member of the public;

(d) Planning policies and goals, and interim and final planning decisions;

(e) Factual staff reports and studies, factual consultant's reports and studies, scientific reports and studies, and any other factual information derived from tests, studies, reports, or surveys, whether conducted by public employees or others; and

(f) Correspondence, and materials referred to therein, by and with the agency relating to any regulatory, supervisory, or enforcement responsibilities of the agency, whereby the agency determines, or opines upon, or is asked to determine or opine upon, the rights of the state, the public, a subdivision of state government, or of any private party.

(4) A local agency need not maintain such an index, if to do so would be unduly burdensome, but it shall in that event:

(a) Issue and publish a formal order specifying the reasons why and the extent to which compliance would unduly burden or interfere with agency operations; and

(b) Make available for public inspection and copying all indexes maintained for agency use.

(5) Each state agency shall, by rule, establish and implement a system of indexing for the identification and location of the following records:

(a) All records issued before July 1, 1990, for which the agency has maintained an index;

(b) Final orders entered after June 30, 1990, that are issued in adjudicative proceedings as defined

in RCW 34.05.010 and that contain an analysis or decision of substantial importance to the agency in carrying out its duties;

(c) Declaratory orders entered after June 30, 1990, that are issued pursuant to RCW 34.05.240 and that contain an analysis or decision of substantial importance to the agency in carrying out its duties;

(d) Interpretive statements as defined in RCW 34.05.010 that were entered after June 30, 1990; and

(e) Policy statements as defined in RCW 34.05.010 that were entered after June 30, 1990.

Rules establishing systems of indexing shall include, but not be limited to, requirements for the form and content of the index, its location and availability to the public, and the schedule for revising or updating the index. State agencies that have maintained indexes for records issued before July 1, 1990, shall continue to make such indexes available for public inspection and copying. Information in such indexes may be incorporated into indexes prepared pursuant to this subsection. State agencies may satisfy the requirements of this subsection by making available to the public indexes prepared by other parties but actually used by the agency in its operations. State agencies shall make indexes available for public inspection and copying. State agencies may charge a fee to cover the actual costs of providing individual mailed copies of indexes.

(6) A public record may be relied on, used, or cited as precedent by an agency against a party other than an agency and it may be invoked by the agency for any other purpose only if:

(a) It has been indexed in an index available to the public; or

(b) Parties affected have timely notice (actual or constructive) of the terms thereof.

(7) Each agency shall establish, maintain, and make available for public inspection and copying a statement of the actual per page cost or other costs, if any, that it charges for providing photocopies of public records and a statement of the factors and manner used to determine the actual per page cost or other costs, if any.

(a) In determining the actual per page cost for providing photocopies of public records, an agency may include all costs directly incident to copying such public records including the actual cost of the paper and the per page cost for use of agency copying equipment. In determining other actual costs for providing photocopies of public records, an agency may include all costs directly incident to shipping such public records, including the cost of postage or delivery charges and the cost of any container or envelope used.

(b) In determining the actual per page cost or other costs for providing copies of public records, an agency may not include staff salaries, benefits, or other general administrative or overhead charges, unless those costs are directly related to the actual cost of copying the public records. Staff time to copy and mail the requested public records may be included in an agency's costs.

(8) An agency need not calculate the actual per page cost or other costs it charges for providing photocopies of public records if to do so would be unduly burdensome, but in that event: The agency may not charge in excess of fifteen cents per page for photocopies of public records or for the use of agency equipment to photocopy public records and the actual postage or delivery charge and the cost of any container or envelope used to mail the public records to the requestor.

(9) This chapter shall not be construed as giving authority to any agency, the office of the secretary of the senate, or the office of the chief clerk of the house of representatives to give, sell or provide access to lists of individuals requested for commercial purposes, and agencies, the office of the secretary of the senate, and the office of the chief clerk of the house of representatives shall not do so

unless specifically authorized or directed by law: PROVIDED, HOWEVER, That lists of applicants for professional licenses and of professional licensees shall be made available to those professional associations or educational organizations recognized by their professional licensing or examination board, upon payment of a reasonable charge therefor: PROVIDED FURTHER, That such recognition may be refused only for a good cause pursuant to a hearing under the provisions of chapter 34.05 RCW, the Administrative Procedure Act.

[2005 c 274 § 284; 1997 c 409 § 601. Prior: 1995 c 397 § 11; 1995 c 341 § 1; 1992 c 139 § 3; 1989 c 175 § 36; 1987 c 403 § 3; 1975 1st ex.s. c 294 § 14; 1973 c 1 § 26 (Initiative Measure No. 276, approved November 7, 1972). Formerly RCW 42.17.260.]

**Notes:**

**\*Reviser's note:** Subsection (6) of this section was renumbered as subsection (7) by 1992 c 139 § 3; and subsection (7) was subsequently renumbered as subsection (9) by 1995 c 341 § 1.

**Part headings -- Severability -- 1997 c 409:** See notes following RCW 43.22.051.

**Effective date -- 1989 c 175:** See note following RCW 34.05.010.

**Intent -- Severability -- 1987 c 403:** See notes following RCW 42.56.050.

Exemption for registered trade names: RCW 19.80.065.

