



Washington State Liquor Control Board

Regulatory/Permitting Guidance for Indoor Cannabis Producers

In addition to the requirements of the Washington State Liquor and Cannabis Board (WSLCB), cannabis producers applying for licenses under Initiative 502 (I-502) may be subject to additional local, state and regional regulations.

These additional regulatory requirements may have separate timelines and costs from the WSLCB process. They can include environmental permitting¹, land-use regulations (zoning), business licensing and building/fire codes.

Note: This fact sheet is for informational purposes only. It is intended to help cannabis producers be aware of local, state and/or regional requirements they may need to meet. For more technical information, contact the local, state and regional regulatory authorities listed below. WSLCB staff cannot answer permitting questions.

Local Government Permits and Regulations

Local governments are responsible for determining how land is used and where businesses can locate in their jurisdictions (except for the 1,000 foot buffer zone mandated by I-502). Typical land-use designations include residential, commercial, industrial, manufacturing and agricultural although local authorities may develop cannabis-specific zoning. Make sure local zoning allows your proposed use before committing to a location.

Local governments may also have their own business licensing requirements. They also administer building, fire, electrical, mechanical, energy and plumbing codes. If you plan to make any changes to the structure or use of your building, you may need a permit.

Tip: Many local governments offer a "pre-application" meeting where you can learn what local permits you will need and the time/cost it will take to obtain them. Call your local permitting agency, often the planning and development department and ask for their help. It could save you time and money.

State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) – SEPA is not a permit; it is an environmental review process which helps governments make decisions about permits and other actions. The WSLCB completed a SEPA review for the rules governing cannabis licensing. Individual producer operations may also have to undertake SEPA reviews. Local permitting agencies will determine if it is necessary.

If SEPA is required, project applicants must complete a checklist describing the possible environmental impacts of their project. Processes such as wastewater and solid waste disposal, CO₂ use in the growing cycle, odors, etc. may be included. Additional guidance about SEPA can be found at:

- www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/sea/sepa/agenciesApplicantsGuidance.html

State and Regional Environmental Permits and Regulations

There are a number of environmental permits and regulations that may apply to indoor growing operations. These permits are generally administered by state or regional agencies unless a local jurisdiction has been delegated by the state to issue the permit.

Water Quality Permits – water quality permits address wastewater or stormwater discharged from a facility or leaving facility grounds. Indoor cannabis producers may need water quality permits if they discharge wastewater from their growing operations, such as water containing excess fertilizers or if they construct a new facility.

Wastewater discharge permits can be issued by either the state Department of Ecology (Ecology) or a local jurisdiction, such as King County, if it has delegated authority. For more information see:

- <http://apps.ecy.wa.gov/permithandbook/permitdetail.asp?id=20>
- www.kingcounty.gov/environment/wastewater/IndustrialWaste/DischargeApprovalOverview.aspx

Tip: Come to your pre-application meeting prepared to describe the amount of water you will need to operate your business, how much wastewater you will discharge and the wastewater composition. This will

¹ The term 'permit' is a synonym for process, permit, authorization, license, regulation, certificate and approval.

help regulators decide if you need a waste water discharge permit, an authorization or your discharge is exempt.

Construction stormwater permits are issued by Ecology and might be needed for construction of a new facility. They are required for land-disturbing activities that disturb one or more acres of land and that discharge stormwater into surface waters of the state. Smaller sites may also need a permit if they are part of a larger development that will disturb one acre or more. For more information see:

- <https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/publications/1010077.pdf>

Chemigation and Fertigation Regulations – Chemigation or fertigation refers to the application of fertilizers and/or pesticides through an irrigation water system. (The definition of fertilizers includes water reclaimed from food processing or wastewater treatment facilities.)

Chemigation and fertigation systems must be installed according to state regulations, WAC 16-202-1001 and WAC 16-202-2002. The Department of Agriculture has a technical assistance program to assist individuals who chemigate and fertigate in protecting human health and the environment from the potential hazard of improper fertilizer and pesticide use. For more information see:

- <http://agr.wa.gov/PestFert/ChemFert/>
- <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=16-202>

Air Quality Permits – Air quality permits regulate releases from industry that could contribute to an increase in air pollution and are issued by Ecology or a local clean air agency, depending on location. If a facility uses a boiler in its operations, such as for heating or CO₂ generation, that boiler could need a permit. See: <http://apps.oria.wa.gov/permithandbook/permitdetail.asp?id=108>

In addition, clean air agencies have the authority to regulate odors that “may unreasonably interfere with another property owner’s use or enjoyment of his property”, (WAC 173-400-040(5)). Facilities that receive odor complaints can be subject to fines or be required to add air filtration equipment.

To determine who regulates air quality in your region, see:

- www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/air/local.html

Tip: Contact the local clean air authority or Ecology before beginning operations to determine if any permit is needed for your operation. Before odor complaints occur, consider adding odor control technology to your building’s heating, ventilation and air conditioning system.

Solid Waste Handling –The cannabis licensing rules require that cannabis wastes from indoor growing operations be rendered unusable by mixing with 50% other materials and ground before disposal or composting. These ground and mixed materials are considered “solid waste” by the state regulations and must be handled according to the state Solid Waste Handling Standards (WAC 173-350) and the requirements of the cannabis licensing rules.

Solid waste regulatory oversight is the responsibility of county health districts (sometimes called “environmental health”). Producers should work with their health district to determine proper disposal of solid wastes.

Tip: Determine how you want to handle your solid waste before beginning operations. Be prepared to discuss the following with your local health district (be as specific as possible):

- *How much waste will you have?*
- *What you will be mixing the cannabis waste with to render it unusable?*
- *How, where and for how long will cannabis waste be stored?*
- *Where will the unusable cannabis waste be sent and who will be transporting it?*
- *Are you planning to compost cannabis waste on-site?*

To find local health districts see:

www.doh.wa.gov/AboutUs/PublicHealthSystem/LocalHealthJurisdictions.aspx

Hazardous Waste Management – Waste pesticides and used mercury-containing bulbs, including high-intensity discharge bulbs (HID), may require special disposal.

- Mercury-containing bulbs: As of January 1, 2013, all mercury-containing lights must be recycled (RCW 70.275.080). For information see: www.ecy.wa.gov/mercury/mercury_light_bulbs.html
- Waste pesticides: The WA State Department of Agriculture operates a waste pesticide collection program; <http://agr.wa.gov/PestFert/Pesticides/WastePesticide.aspx>

Tip: Waste pesticides may be accepted at your local hazardous waste collection facility and a list of commercial lamp recyclers can be found at: <http://apps.ecy.wa.gov/hwsd/> by searching under "Fluorescent Light and Ballast Management."

Do You Need Environmental Permits?

Applicants are advised to consult with local and state authorities since permit requirements vary based on site- and process-specific conditions. This document is for reference purposes only. Your local permitting agency should be able to determine if you will need any environmental permits.

You can also contact the Department of Ecology in your region for more information and assistance. See www.ecy.wa.gov/org.html