

## Chapter Comm 3

### PETITION FOR VARIANCE PROCEDURES

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**Note:** Chapter ILHR 3 as it existed on November 30, 1988 was repealed and a new chapter ILHR 3 was created effective December 1, 1988. Chapter ILHR 3 was renumbered ch. Comm 3 under s. 13.93 (2m) (b) 1., Stats., and corrections made under s. 13.93 (2m) (b) 6. and 7., Stats., Register, June, 1998, No. 510.

**Comm 3.001 Purpose.** The purpose of this chapter is to specify procedures for applying for a variance from a rule administered and enforced by the division of safety and buildings in the department. If the provisions of this chapter differ from those specified in the code containing the rule from which the variance is being requested, the most restrictive requirement shall govern.

**History:** Cr. Register, November, 1988, No. 395, eff. 12-1-88

**Comm 3.002 Scope.** This chapter specifies who may apply for a petition for variance from a rule, the procedures that must be followed when applying for and processing a petition for variance, and the procedures for appealing a decision on a petition for variance.

**History:** Cr. Register, November, 1988, No. 395, eff. 12-1-88.

**Comm 3.01 Petition procedures.** Except as specified in ss. Comm 3.04 and 3.05, all petitions for variance from rules of the division shall be processed as provided for in s. Comm 3.03. Appeals shall be handled as set forth in s. Comm 3.06.

**History:** Cr. Register, November, 1988, No. 395, eff. 12-1-88.

**Comm 3.02 Definitions.** (1) "Administrator" means the administrator of the division of safety and buildings in the department of commerce.

(2) "Department" means the department of commerce.

(3) "Director" means the director of the office of division codes and application.

(4) "Division" means the division of safety and buildings.

(5) "Equivalency" means the same intent and degree of safety, health or public welfare as contained in the requirements specified in a rule.

(6) "Office" means the office of division codes and application.

(7) "Public employe" means any employe of the state, of any state agency or of any political subdivision of the state.

(8) "Public employer" means the state, any state agency or any political subdivision of the state.

(9) "Secretary" means the secretary of the department of commerce.

(10) "Significant ownership rights" means any person having ownership, control or custody of any structure, one- or 2-family dwelling, place of employment or public building, or of the construction, repair or maintenance of any structure, one- or 2-family dwelling, place of employment or public building.

(11) "Variance" means a specified alternative to or deviation from a rule.

**History:** Cr. Register, November, 1988, No. 395, eff. 12-1-88.

**Comm 3.03 General variances.** (1) **SCOPE.** Any person having significant ownership rights may petition for a variance from any rule of the division. The petition for variance shall estab-

lish an equivalency which meets the intent of the rule being petitioned.

(2) **APPLICATION FOR PETITION FOR VARIANCE.** Application for a petition for variance from a rule shall be made on forms furnished by the division. The following shall be submitted when requesting a variance from a rule:

(a) A completed and notarized petition for variance form including a clear and concise written statement of the specific provisions of the rule from which the variance is requested along with a specific statement of the procedures and materials to be used if the variance is granted;

(b) A petition for variance fee as specified in ch. Comm 2;

(c) A completed position statement on the petition for variance from the department of health and social services, where applicable;

(d) A completed position statement on the petition for variance from the chief of the fire department having jurisdiction, where applicable; and

(e) A completed municipal recommendation on the petition for variance from the enforcement official of the municipality exercising jurisdiction, where applicable.

**Note:** The submittal of position statements and municipal recommendations is dependent on the rule being petitioned and is specified in the code under which the variance is requested.

**Note:** Copies of the petition for variance forms are available at no charge from the Division of Safety and Buildings, P.O. Box 2658, Madison, WI 53701, telephone 608/266-3151.

(3) **DIVISION ACTION.** (a) Upon receipt of the petition for variance form, the applicable fee and the position statement, and any other documents the petitioner may wish to submit, the office shall evaluate the petition for variance and determine if the petition for variance provides for an equivalency which meets the intent of the rule being petitioned.

(b) Except as provided in sub. (5), requests for petitions for variance shall be evaluated on a first come, first serve basis with respect to the code involved.

(c) If additional information is needed by the office to review the petition for variance and make a determination, the office shall notify the owner in writing of the specific information required.

(d) If it is determined that the petition for variance provides an equivalency, the petition for variance shall be approved by the director.

(e) If it is determined that the petition for variance does not provide an equivalency, the director may:

1. Approve the petition for variance subject to specific conditions determined by the office which shall establish an equivalency which meets the intent of the rule;

2. Grant a temporary variance to delay enforcement of a rule to a specified date, not to exceed one year. In requesting the variance, the petitioner shall demonstrate that all available steps are being taken to safeguard the public and employes against the hazard covered by the rule from which the variance is sought and shall possess and describe a program for coming into compliance with the rule as quickly as possible. A temporary variance may be renewed no more than twice, not to exceed one year each, and only

if the petitioner files an application for renewal at least 90 calendar days before expiration of the temporary variance;

3. Grant an experimental variance to allow the petitioner to participate in an experiment approved by the office to demonstrate or validate new or improved techniques to safeguard the health or safety of the public and employees; or

4. Deny the petition for variance.

**(4) NOTIFICATION OF PETITION FOR VARIANCE DETERMINATION**

The office shall notify the petitioner in writing of the petition for variance determination, including any conditions of approval. Any denial shall include the reason for denial, and information on the appeals procedure.

**(5) TIME LIMIT FOR PROCESSING.** (a) Except as provided in pars. (b) to (d), the office shall review and make a determination on an application for a petition for variance within 30 business days of the receipt of the application and all forms, fees and other documents necessary to complete the review.

(b) Upon request of the petitioner and submittal of the required fee, the office shall facilitate the review of a petition in less than the processing time specified in par. (a). The fee for this type of priority petition review shall be twice the fee required for the processing time specified in par. (a). The office shall review and make a determination on an application for a priority petition for variance within 10 business days of the receipt of the application and all forms, fees and other documents necessary to complete the review.

(c) Petitions for variance from a rule contained in chs. ILHR 20 to 25 shall be processed by the office within 5 business days of receipt of the required information where a municipality administers and enforces the code, and within 15 business days of receipt of the required information where the division administers and enforces the code.

(d) Petitions for variance from a rule contained in ch. Comm 70 shall be processed by the office within 10 business days of receipt of the required information.

(e) When additional information is requested by the office to complete the review of the petition, the amount of time from the date of the request to the date of receipt by the office of the information will not be included in the processing times specified in pars. (a) to (d). The full period for review specified in pars. (a) to (d) shall apply from the date of receipt of the additional information.

(f) 1. If a petition for variance is submitted with a request for a plan review under s. Comm 82.20, the processing times of this subsection for the petition and the processing times of s. Comm 82.20 (1) for the plan review shall run concurrently.

2. If a petition for variance is submitted with a request for a plan review under either s. Comm 50.12 or 83.07 and 83.08, the processing times of this subsection for the petition and the processing times of ss. Comm 50.12 (5) and 83.07 (1) (d) for the plan review shall run consecutively, with the petition being processed first.

**(6) MODIFICATIONS AND REVISIONS.** (a) If a petition for variance is initially denied by the director, the petitioner may, in writing, modify the request for variance by submitting additional or other alternatives in order to provide an equivalency and resubmit the application for the petition for variance.

(b) The petitioner may, in writing, request that his or her original petition statements or the conditions of approval be modified and resubmit the application for the petition for variance.

**(7) REVOCATION.** The director may revoke any petition for variance where it is determined that the variance was obtained through fraud or deceit or where the petitioner has violated the specific conditions on which the variance was approved.

**History:** Cr. Register, November, 1988, No. 395, eff. 12-1-88; correction in (2) (b) made under s. 13.93 (2m) (b) 7., Stats., Register, January, 1995, No. 469.

**Comm 3.04 Public employer variances. (1) TYPES OF VARIANCES.** Pursuant to s. 101.055 (4), Stats., a public employer may apply to the office for a temporary, experimental or permanent variance on occupational safety and health rules affecting public employees.

(a) *Temporary variance.* 1. The director may grant a temporary variance before a rule goes into effect if the public employer complies with subs. (2) and (3) and establishes that it is unable to comply with a rule by the rule's effective date because of unavailability of professional or technical personnel or of necessary materials or equipment or because necessary construction or alteration of facilities cannot be completed by the effective date.

2. The employer shall also show that it is taking all available steps to safeguard employees against the hazard covered by the rule from which the variance is sought and shall possess and describe a program for coming into compliance with the rule as quickly as possible.

3. If a hearing on the application for variance is requested, the director may state in writing that non-compliance with the rule is permitted for 180 calendar days or until a decision is made after the hearing, whichever is earlier.

4. A temporary variance shall be in effect for a period to time needed by the employer to achieve compliance with the rule or for one year, whichever is shorter.

5. A temporary variance may be renewed no more than twice, and only if the public employer files an application for renewal at least 90 calendar days before expiration of the temporary variance.

(b) *Experimental variance.* The director may grant an experimental variance if the public employer complies with subs. (2) and (3) and it is determined that the variance is necessary to permit the employer to participate in an experiment approved by the director to demonstrate or validate new or improved techniques to safeguard the health or safety of employees.

(c) *Permanent variance.* The director may grant a permanent variance if the public employer complies with subs. (2) and (3) and it is determined that the employer has demonstrated by a preponderance of the evidence that the conditions and methods the employer uses or proposes to use provide employment or a place of employment which is as safe and healthful as that provided under the rule from which the employer seeks a permanent variance. A permanent variance may be modified or revoked upon application by the employer, an affected employee, a public employee representative or the department and after opportunity for a hearing on the application, but not sooner than 6 months after issuance of the permanent variance.

**(2) APPLICATION FOR PETITION FOR VARIANCE.** Application for a petition for variance of a rule shall be made on forms furnished by the division. The following shall be submitted when requesting a variance from a rule:

(a) A completed and notarized petition for variance form including a clear and concise written statement of the specific provisions of the rule from which the variance is requested along with a specific statement of the procedures and materials to be used if the variance is granted; and

(b) A petition for variance fee as specified in ch. Comm 2.

**Note:** Copies of the petition for variance forms are available at no charge from the Division of Safety and Buildings, P.O. Box 2658, Madison, WI 53701, telephone 608/266-3151.

**(3) NOTIFICATION TO EMPLOYEES.** (a) The employer shall provide a copy of the application for petition for variance to the appropriate public employee representatives.

(b) A copy of the petition for variance shall be posted by the employer at places where notices to employees are normally posted.

(c) The notice shall summarize the application and inform public employes of the right to request a hearing. Employes shall have 15 business days to request a hearing.

(d) The public employer shall furnish evidence to the office that conditions specified in par. (c) have been satisfied and that public employes have no interest in requesting a hearing from the office.

**(4) HEARING.** (a) Upon receipt of a written request for a hearing from a public employer, an affected public employe or a public employe representative, the office shall schedule a hearing on the petition and inform the parties in writing about the date, time and place for the hearing. The office shall hold the hearing within 30 business days from receipt of the request, unless the person requesting the hearing asks for an extension.

(b) Where a hearing is requested, no decision may be made by the director until a hearing has been held.

**(5) DIVISION ACTION.** (a) Unless a hearing is requested upon receipt of the petition for variance form, the office shall evaluate the petition for variance and determine if the petition for variance provides for an equivalent degree of safety or health. The petition shall prescribe the methods and conditions which the employer must adopt and maintain while the variance is in effect.

(b) If additional information is needed by the office to review the petition for variance and make a determination, the office shall notify the owner in writing of the specific information requested.

(c) If it is determined that the petition for variance provides an equivalent degree of safety or health, the petition for variance shall be approved by the director.

(d) If it is determined that the petition for variance does not provide an equivalent degree of safety or health, the director may:

1. Approve the petition for variance subject to specific conditions determined by the office which will establish an equivalent degree of safety or health as specified in the rule;
2. Grant a temporary variance as specified in sub. (1) (a);
3. Grant an experimental variance as specified in sub. (1) (b);

or

4. Deny the petition for variance.

**(6) NOTIFICATION OF PETITION FOR VARIANCE DETERMINATION.** The office shall notify the petitioner and affected parties in writing of the petition for variance determination. Any denial shall include the reason for denial, and information on the appeals procedure.

**(7) TIME LIMIT FOR PROCESSING.** The office shall process petitions submitted under this section as specified in s. Comm 3.03 (5).

**(8) REVOCATION.** The director may revoke any petition for variance where it is determined that the variance was obtained through fraud or deceit or where the petitioner has violated the specific conditions on which the variance was approved.

**History:** Cr. Register, November, 1988, No. 395, eff. 12-1-88; correction in (2) (b) made under s. 13.93 (2m) (b) 7., Stats., Register, January, 1995, No. 469.

**Comm 3.05 Exemptions under the right-to-know law. (1) DEFINITIONS.** In this section:

- (a) "Employee" means any person as defined in s. 101.58 (2) (c), Stats.
- (b) "Employe representative" means any individual or organization as defined in s. 101.58 (2) (d), Stats.
- (c) "Employer" means any person as defined in s. 101.58 (2) (e), Stats.

**(2) PETITIONS.** (a) Pursuant to s. 101.598 (2), Stats., an employer may petition the office for an exemption from retaining a data sheet or maintaining an identification list as specified in s. 101.583 (1), Stats., regarding any mixture containing a toxic substance.

(b) A petition for the exemption shall be in writing. Petitions for exemption shall be sent to: Division of Safety and Buildings,

Office of Division Codes and Application, P.O. Box 7969, Madison, Wisconsin 53707.

(c) The petition shall be accompanied by the appropriate information and documentation indicating:

1. That the nature of the toxic substance or the quantity of the toxic substance present in the mixture is such that the mixture is highly unlikely to pose an unreasonable acute or chronic health hazard to an employe who works with or is likely to be exposed to the mixture; and

2. The specific conditions and procedures under which the mixture is to be used if the exemption is granted.

(d) An employer requesting an exemption shall provide a copy of the petition to the appropriate employe representative and shall post a statement at the place where notices to employes are normally posted. The posted statement shall summarize the petition, specify a place where employes may examine it and inform employes of their right to request a hearing on it. Employes shall have 15 business days to request a hearing.

**(3) DIVISION ACTION.** (a) Upon receipt of a petition for exemption, the applicable fee and any other documents the employer may wish to submit, the office shall evaluate the petition and determine if the exemption may be granted.

(b) If additional information is needed by the office to review the petition in order to make a determination, the office shall notify the employer in writing of the specific information required.

(c) Upon receipt of a written request for a hearing from the employer, an affected employe or employe representative, the office shall schedule a hearing on the petition and inform the interested parties in writing about the date, time and place for the hearing. If a hearing has been requested, the director shall not act on the petition for exemption until the hearing has been held. The office shall hold the hearing within 30 business days from receipt of the request, unless the person requesting the hearing asks for an extension.

(d) The office shall review and make a determination on a petition for exemption within 60 business days, but no sooner than 15 business days, after receipt of the petition and any additional information which may be required by the office or after a hearing is held in accordance with par. (c).

(e) The office shall notify the employer and any interested parties as to the determination of the petition.

(f) The director may grant the petition for exemption subject to specific conditions.

(g) A denial of the exemption shall include the reason for the denial and information on the appeals procedure.

(h) If the petition for exemption is granted, the employer shall post a statement at the place where notices to employes are normally posted. The posted notice shall summarize the exemption and the specific conditions under which the exemption is granted and inform employes of their right to appeal the exemption.

**(4) REVOCATION.** The director may revoke an exemption when it is determined that the exemption was obtained through fraud or deceit, where the employer has violated the specific conditions of the exemption or new information repudiates the original information on which the exemption was granted.

**History:** Cr. Register, November, 1988, No. 395, eff. 12-1-88.

**Comm 3.06 Appeals on petitions. (1) APPLICATION.** The provisions of this section shall apply to appeals on any determinations made under ss. Comm 3.03, 3.04 and 3.05.

**(2) PETITION FOR A HEARING WITH ADMINISTRATOR.** (a) Any person who wishes to contest a determination on a petition made by the director may file an appeal with the administrator for a hearing.

(b) The petition for a hearing shall contain a statement of the specific reasons why the person believes a hearing should be held.

(c) For a petition for a hearing to be valid, it shall be received within 30 calendar days from the date of the notification of the director's determination.

**(3) DETERMINATION FOR HEARING** (a) If it is determined by the administrator that insufficient reasons are provided for a hearing, the request for a hearing may be denied. The person who requested the hearing shall be notified of any denial for a request for hearing in writing along with the reasons for denial.

(b) If upon review, it is determined that a hearing shall be granted, the administrator shall inform the person making the request and, if different, the person who filed the original petition about the date, time and place of the hearing. The administrator shall hold the hearing within 30 business days from receipt of the request, unless the person requesting the hearing asks for an extension.

**(4) HEARING** The administrator shall hear and decide on the appeal. The decision resulting from this hearing shall be issued within 30 business days from the date of the hearing. The person who requested the hearing shall be notified of the decision in writing, and be provided with information on the appeal procedure.

**(5) PETITION FOR SECRETARY HEARING** (a) Any person wishing to contest a decision made by the administrator may file an appeal with the secretary for a hearing.

(b) The petition for a hearing shall contain a statement of the specific reasons why the person believes a hearing should be held.

(c) For a petition for a hearing to be valid, it shall be received within 30 calendar days from the date of the notification of the administrator's decision.

**(6) DETERMINATION FOR HEARING** (a) If it is determined by the secretary that insufficient reasons are provided for a hearing, the request for a hearing may be denied. The person who requested the hearing shall be notified of any denial for a request for hearing in writing along with the reasons for denial.

(b) If upon review, it is determined that a hearing shall be granted, the secretary shall inform the person making the request and, if different, the person who filed the original petition about the date, time and place of the hearing. The secretary shall hold the hearing within 30 business days from receipt of the request, unless the person requesting the hearing asks for an extension.

**(7) HEARING** The secretary may hear and decide the appeal or the secretary may designate a hearing examiner to hear the appeal and make a recommended finding to the secretary, who will then make the final decision on the appeal.

**(8) FINAL ORDER** Any decision resulting from the hearing with the secretary shall be the final order of the department. The decision shall be issued within 30 business days from the date of the hearing. The person who requested the hearing shall be notified of the final order in writing, and be provided with information on the appeal procedure for rehearing or judicial review.

**(9) PETITION FOR REHEARING** Any person aggrieved by a final order may, within 20 calendar days after service of the final order, file a written petition with the secretary for rehearing. Unless this order was served personally, service occurred on the date of mailing as set forth in the letter of transmittal. The petition for rehearing shall specify the grounds for the relief sought and supporting authorities.

*Note:* See s. 227.49, Stats., for procedural details regarding petitions for rehearing.

**(10) PETITION FOR JUDICIAL REVIEW** Any person aggrieved by a final order or a decision from rehearing is entitled to judicial review. The petition for judicial review shall be served and filed with all parties within 30 calendar days after the service of this decision. The petition for judicial review shall identify the department as the respondent.

*Note:* See s. 227.53, Stats., for complete procedural details regarding petitions for judicial review.

*History:* Cr. Register, November, 1988, No. 395, eff. 12-1-88.