

# Your Right to be Heard

## A Guide to the Appeal Process

WISHA

*Washington Industrial Safety and Health Act*

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## **Introduction**

### **What is the BIIA?**

The Board of Industrial Insurance Appeals (BIIA) is a state agency that is **independent** from the Department of Labor and Industries (L&I). The BIIA hears appeals from decisions made by L&I in several areas. The three principal types of appeals are:

- Workers' compensation and employer premium assessment
- Safety citations under WISHA, the Washington Industrial Safety and Health Act
- Crime victim compensation

The BIIA is administered by three full-time Board Members appointed by the Governor.

### **Where do I find rules about appeals?**

Most of the rules can be found in the BIIA's *Rules of Practice and Procedure*. You can find this publication online at [www.biia.wa.gov](http://www.biia.wa.gov). Statutes and rules can also be found at [www.leg.wa.gov/lawsandagencyrules](http://www.leg.wa.gov/lawsandagencyrules).

## Requests for stay of abatement

If you request a stay of abatement pending appeal you should carefully read the filing requirements found in WAC 263-12-059. Your request must be contained in your Notice of Appeal. Your request must include names and addresses of any affected unions, and a certification of posting a notice to employees. Additionally, you must file affidavits and documents supporting the request within 14 calendar days of the date of the Board's Notice of Filing of Appeal. If you fail to meet the filing requirements, the request for a stay of the abatement will be denied. The Board will rule on the request based only on the documents. There will be no oral hearing on the request for stay of abatement.

## *Receipt of Appeal*

What happens when the BIIA receives an appeal? It will:

- Assign a docket number to the appeal.
- Mail a Notice of Filing of Appeal to the parties.
- Mail a form for the employer to complete regarding unions.

## *Attorneys*

Parties can represent themselves before the BIIA. They can also bring someone with them to give advice and support, or they may be represented by an attorney. They may also be represented by a lay representative (non-attorney) as allowed by WAC 263-12-020(3).

L&I will be represented by a paralegal or an attorney from the Office of the Attorney General.

## *The Mediation Conference*

What happens next?

A mediation conference will be held in most cases. A mediation conference is an informal meeting of the parties with a mediation judge.

A notice of conference will be sent to all parties

All parties will receive a notice indicating the date, time, and location of the conference. The conference may be held in person or by telephone.

Mediation is not a hearing—witnesses will not be called to testify. An attorney is not required, although the assistance of an attorney may be helpful.

The mediation judge may schedule further conferences, if needed.

## What are the advantages of mediation?

In mediation, parties are able to discuss the appeal in a relaxed, confidential, and informal setting. If a settlement can be reached in mediation, the parties avoid the uncertainty, expense, and delay of a formal hearing.

## What is the mediator's role?

- The mediator will discuss options for settling the appeal. The mediator will not decide the outcome of the appeal.
- The mediator can speak to parties privately. This process allows the mediator to meet separately with each party to explore settlement options.
- The mediator may look at the information supporting a party's position and may suggest what additional information may be necessary.
- The mediator cannot give legal advice but will answer questions about the process.

## What should I bring to the mediation conference?

Look at the L&I decision that was appealed. Consider what it would take to settle the appeal. Gather all documents that support your position and bring them to the mediation conference. Don't bring originals. Instead, bring copies.

Bring the Jurisdictional History. This is a summary of the history of the case. Be ready to discuss whether this history is correct.

## What happens if the appeal is resolved?

An appeal can be resolved in two ways:

- The party that filed the appeal can voluntarily dismiss the appeal.
- The parties can agree on a settlement. (If a union does not sign the agreement, it must be posted at the employer's business for 10 days.)

The BIIA will then issue either an Order Dismissing Appeal or an Order on Agreement of Parties.

## What happens if the appeal is not resolved?

When a settlement cannot be reached, the case will be given to a hearings judge, who will schedule a formal hearing. To ensure confidentiality, the mediator is not allowed to discuss the case with the hearings judge.

## **Hearings**

### **What are the rules for BIIA hearings?**

BIIA hearings are like trials. The Rules of Evidence and Superior Court Civil Rules apply. Parties must be familiar with these rules in order to ensure that all their testimony and evidence will be admitted at the hearings.

Find the  
Rules of Evidence and  
Superior Court Civil Rules at  
[www.courts.wa.gov](http://www.courts.wa.gov)

### **Do I need an attorney?**

At this point, the appealing party should consider finding an attorney. An experienced attorney will represent L&I or the self-insured employer. An attorney can negotiate with the opposing parties, help obtain necessary witnesses, and make objections.

### **What is the hearing judge's role?**

The judge assigned to the case can help question witnesses, but will not act as an attorney for the parties. The hearing judge must remain neutral and cannot discuss the case without all parties present.

### **Where will the hearing take place?**

All parties will receive a notice indicating the date, time, and location of the hearing. The first hearing is usually held in the county where the alleged violation occurred.

### **What will happen at the hearing?**

All evidence must be presented at the hearing. The evidence presented at the hearing will be the only basis for the decision at the BIIA or at a higher court.

At the hearing, the parties will present their witnesses, who will testify under oath. All testimony will be recorded by a court reporter. Each party is responsible for arranging for their witnesses to testify, and for paying witness fees.

In a WISHA case, L&I must present evidence first.

## ***Proposed Decision and Order***

When all hearings are completed and all evidence has been received, the hearing judge will issue a Proposed Decision and Order, which is the hearing judge's decision on the appeal.

## ***Petition for Review***

### *What if I disagree with the judge's decision?*

You may ask the three Board Members to review the judge's decision. Make your request **in writing** and title it "Petition for Review."

### *How much time do I have to file a Petition for Review?*

File your Petition for Review with the BIIA's Olympia office within 20 days from the date you receive the PD&O.

**File a Petition  
for Review  
within 20 days**

### *What must be in a Petition for Review?*

RCW 51.52.104 and WAC 263-12-145 set forth the requirements for a Petition for Review. Your Petition for Review **must**:

- Note "PETITION FOR REVIEW" on the first page.
- Contain the following information:
  1. The Case Name, BIIA Docket Number, and Department Citation and Notice Number.
  2. The reasons you believe the PD&O is incorrect. State the evidence in the record that supports your petition.
  3. Any rulings made by the judge that you think are incorrect.
  4. A "Declaration of Receipt" stating the date the PD&O was received.

Do not include other pleadings with your Petition for Review. File your Petition for Review with the Executive Secretary in the BIIA's Olympia office within 20 days. You may file in person, by mail, by facsimile, or online:

Board of Industrial Insurance Appeals  
2430 Chandler Ct. SW  
P.O. Box 42401  
Olympia, WA 98504-2401  
FAX: 360-586-5611 (Olympia area) or 855-586-5611  
Online: [www.biiwa.gov](http://www.biiwa.gov)

- If filed by mail, your petition is considered filed when it is deposited in the United States Postal Service, properly stamped and addressed.
- If you mail your petition on the date of your deadline, complete a "Certificate of Mailing" as proof of the mailing date.
- If you file online or by fax, we must receive it by 5 p.m. on the date of your deadline. Petitions received after 5 p.m. will be deemed filed the next business day.
- Mail copies of your petition to all other parties. Their names and addresses appear on the mailing cover page included with the PD&O.

### Can I get transcripts of the hearings?

Yes, we will provide you with copies of the transcripts, depositions, and exhibits in your case free of charge. Send your request for these documents to [transcripts@biiia.wa.gov](mailto:transcripts@biiia.wa.gov).

### Can I request an extension of time to file a Petition for Review?

Yes. Your request **must**:

1. Be in writing and should state the reasons why the extension is needed.
2. Be filed with the BIIA's **Olympia** office within 20 days from the date of receipt of the PD&O.
3. Include a "Declaration of Receipt" stating the date you received the PD&O.

The Board determines if an extension is granted and for how long. You must file your Petition for Review within the 20-day time period unless the Board grants you an extension.

### Where do I find rules about Petitions for Review?

You can find statutes and rules in the Revised Code of Washington (RCW Chapter 51.52) and Washington Administrative Code (WAC 263-12). These are legal publications available in law libraries or online at [www.biiia.wa.gov](http://www.biiia.wa.gov) and [www.leg.wa.gov/lawsandagencyrules](http://www.leg.wa.gov/lawsandagencyrules).

### What if no one files a Petition for Review within the time allowed?

The PD&O becomes the final order of the Board. You cannot appeal to superior court.

### What if a Petition for Review is filed?

The Board will determine whether to grant or deny the petition following a review of the record based on the grounds detailed in the Petition for Review and the evidence cited in the record in support thereof.

- If a Petition for Review is denied, the Board will issue an "Order Denying Petition for Review." The PD&O becomes the final order of the Board.
- If a Petition for Review is granted, the Board will issue a Decision and Order. The Board must issue the Decision and Order within 180 days of the date the Petition for Review was filed.

## ***Appeals to Superior Court***

### What if I disagree with the decision reached in the Decision and Order?

Any party who disagrees with any portion of the decision may appeal to superior court.

## How much time do I have to appeal to superior court?

In a WISHA case, your appeal to superior court must be filed within 30 days from the date you receive the BIIA's final order.

## In what county do I file a superior court appeal?

In a WISHA case, file the appeal in the county where the violation is alleged to have occurred.

## Do I need to send copies of the appeal to anyone?

Copies of the appeal **MUST** be mailed or hand-delivered to the BIIA and L&I:

Board of Industrial Insurance Appeals  
2430 Chandler Court SW  
P.O. Box 42401  
Olympia, WA 98504-2401

Department of Labor and Industries  
DOSH Appeals  
P.O. Box 44604  
Olympia, WA 98504-4604

## Is there a form for filing an appeal in superior court?

No. Each superior court has its own filing requirements. There is a directory available on the Washington Courts website to help you locate the appropriate superior court: [www.courts.wa.gov/court\\_dir](http://www.courts.wa.gov/court_dir).

## What evidence will the superior court consider?

The case will be tried based on the record made before the BIIA. The record consists of transcripts, depositions, and exhibits offered during BIIA hearings.

## Where do I find the rules about superior court appeals?

Statutes and rules can be found in the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) and Washington Administrative Code (WAC). These are legal publications available in law libraries. They are also available on the Washington State Legislature website: [www.leg.wa.gov/lawsandagencyrules](http://www.leg.wa.gov/lawsandagencyrules).

Most of these rules can be found in the BIIA's *Rules of Practice and Procedure*, a publication found at [www.biiwa.gov](http://www.biiwa.gov).

- WISHA: See RCW 49.17.150.

Superior court local rules can be found on the Washington Courts website: [www.courts.wa.gov/court\\_rules](http://www.courts.wa.gov/court_rules).

***Do you have more questions?***

**For more information:**

*Visit the Web*

**[www.biia.wa.gov](http://www.biia.wa.gov)**

*General Information*

**360-753-6823 or 800-441-0447**

*Headquarters*

**Board of Industrial Insurance Appeals**

2430 Chandler Court SW

P.O. Box 42401

Olympia, WA 98504-2401