144.991 ADMINISTRATIVE PENALTY ORDER PROCEDURE.

Subdivision 1. **Amount of penalty; considerations.** (a) In determining the amount of a penalty under section 144.99, subdivision 4, the commissioner may consider:

(1) the willfulness of the violation;

(2) the gravity of the violation, including damage to humans, animals, air, water, land, or other natural resources of the state;

(3) the history of past violations;

(4) the number of violations;

(5) the economic benefit gained by the person by allowing or committing the violation; and

(6) other factors as justice may require, if the commissioner specifically identifies the additional factors in the commissioner's order.

(b) For a violation after an initial violation, the commissioner shall, in determining the amount of a penalty, consider the factors in paragraph (a) and the:

(1) similarity of the most recent previous violation and the violation to be penalized;

(2) time elapsed since the last violation;

(3) number of previous violations; and

(4) response of the person to the most recent previous violation identified.

Subd. 2. **Contents of order.** An order assessing an administrative penalty under section 144.99, subdivision 4, must include:

(1) a concise statement of the facts alleged to constitute a violation;

(2) a reference to the section of the statute, rule, variance, order, stipulation agreement, or term or condition of a permit that has been violated;

(3) a statement of the amount of the administrative penalty to be imposed and the factors upon which the penalty is based; and

(4) a statement of the person's right to review of the order.

Subd. 3. **Corrective order.** (a) The commissioner may issue an order assessing a penalty and requiring the violations cited in the order to be corrected within 30 calendar days from the date the order is received.

(b) The person to whom the order was issued shall provide information to the commissioner before the 31st day after the order was received demonstrating that the violation has been corrected or that the person has developed a corrective plan acceptable to the commissioner. The commissioner shall determine whether the violation has been corrected and notify the person subject to the order of the commissioner's determination.

Subd. 4. **Penalty.** (a) Except as provided in paragraph (b), if the commissioner determines that the violation has been corrected or the person to whom the order was issued has developed a corrective plan acceptable to the commissioner, the penalty must be forgiven. Unless the person requests review of the order under subdivision 5 before the penalty is due, the penalty in the order is due and payable:

(1) on the 31st day after the order was received, if the person subject to the order fails to provide information to the commissioner showing that the violation has been corrected or that appropriate steps have been taken toward correcting the violation; or

(2) on the 20th day after the person receives the commissioner's determination under paragraph (b), if the person subject to the order has provided information to the commissioner that the commissioner determines is not sufficient to show the violation has been corrected or that appropriate steps have been taken toward correcting the violation.

(b) For repeated or serious violations, the commissioner may issue an order with a penalty that will not be forgiven after the corrective action is taken. The penalty is due by 31 days after the order was received unless review of the order under subdivision 5 has been sought.

(c) Interest at the rate established in section 549.09 begins to accrue on penalties under this subdivision on the 31st day after the order with the penalty was received.

Subd. 5. **Expedited administrative hearing.** (a) Within 30 days after receiving an order or within 20 days after receiving notice that the commissioner has determined that a violation has not been corrected or appropriate steps have not been taken, the person subject to an order under this section may request an expedited hearing, using the procedures of Minnesota Rules, parts 1400.8510 to 1400.8612, to review the commissioner's action. The hearing request must specifically state the reasons for seeking review of the order. The person to whom the order is directed and the commissioner are the parties to the expedited hearing. The commissioner must notify the person to whom the order is directed of the time and place of the hearing at least 15 days before the hearing. The expedited hearing must be held within 30 days after a request for hearing has been filed with the commissioner unless the parties agree to a later date.

(b) All written arguments must be submitted within ten days following the close of the hearing. The hearing shall be conducted under Minnesota Rules, parts 1400.8510 to 1400.8612, as modified by this subdivision. The Court of Administrative Hearings may, in consultation with the agency, adopt rules specifically applicable to cases under this section.

(c) The administrative law judge shall issue a report making recommendations about the commissioner's action to the commissioner within 30 days following the close of the record. The administrative law judge may not recommend a change in the amount of the proposed penalty unless the administrative law judge determines that, based on the factors in subdivision 1, the amount of the penalty is unreasonable.

(d) If the administrative law judge makes a finding that the hearing was requested solely for purposes of delay or that the hearing request was frivolous, the commissioner may add to the amount of the penalty the costs charged to the agency by the Court of Administrative Hearings for the hearing.

(e) If a hearing has been held, the commissioner may not issue a final order until at least five days after receipt of the report of the administrative law judge. The person to whom an order is issued may, within those five days, comment to the commissioner on the recommendations and the commissioner will consider the comments. The final order may be appealed in the manner provided in sections 14.63 to 14.69.

(f) If a hearing has been held and a final order issued by the commissioner, the penalty shall be paid by 30 days after the date the final order is received unless review of the final order is requested under sections 14.63 to 14.69. If review is not requested or the order is reviewed and upheld, the amount due is the penalty, together with interest accruing from 31 days after the original order was received at the rate established in section 549.09.

Subd. 6. **Mediation.** In addition to review under subdivision 5, the commissioner is authorized to enter into mediation concerning an order issued under this section if the commissioner and the person to whom the order is issued both agree to mediation.

Subd. 7. **Enforcement.** (a) The attorney general may proceed on behalf of the state to enforce penalties that are due and payable under this section in any manner provided by law for the collection of debts.

(b) The attorney general may petition the district court to file the administrative order as an order of the court. At any court hearing, the only issues parties may contest are procedural and notice issues. Once entered, the administrative order may be enforced in the same manner as a final judgment of the district court.

(c) If a person fails to pay the penalty, the attorney general may bring a civil action in district court seeking payment of the penalties, injunctive, or other appropriate relief including monetary damages, attorney fees, costs, and interest.

Subd. 8. **Revocation and suspension of permit, license, registration, or certificate.** If a person fails to pay a penalty owed under this section, the agency has grounds to revoke or refuse to reissue or renew a permit, license, registration, or certificate issued by the department.

Subd. 9. **Cumulative remedy.** The authority of the agency to issue a corrective order assessing penalties is in addition to other remedies available under statutory or common law, except that the state may not seek civil penalties under any other provision of law for the violations covered by the administrative penalty order. The payment of a penalty does not preclude the use of other enforcement provisions, under which penalties are not assessed, in connection with the violation for which the penalty was assessed.

History: *1993 c 206 s 9; 1994 c 465 art 1 s 18,19; 1995 c 165 s 10; 2025 c 39 art 2 s 68*