

State of California  
BOARD OF EQUALIZATION

SALES AND USE TAX REGULATION

**Regulation 1705. RELIEF FROM LIABILITY.**

*Reference:* Section 6596, Revenue and Taxation Code.

**(a) IN GENERAL.** A person may be relieved from the liability for the payment of sales and use taxes, including any penalties and interest added to those taxes, when that liability resulted from the failure to make a timely return or a payment and such failure was found by the Board to be due to reasonable reliance on:

(1) Written advice given by the Board under the conditions set forth in subdivision (b) below; or

(2) Written advice in the form of an annotation or legal ruling of counsel under the conditions set forth in subdivision (d) below; or

(3) Written advice given by the Board in a prior audit of that person under the conditions set forth in subdivision (c) below. As used in this regulation, the term "prior audit" means any audit conducted prior to the current examination where the issue in question was examined.

Written advice from the Board may only be relied upon by the person to whom it was originally issued or a legal or statutory successor to that person. Written advice from the Board which was received during a prior audit of the person under the conditions set forth in subdivision (c) below, may be relied upon by the person audited or by a legal or statutory successor to that person.

The term "written advice" includes advice that was incorrect at the time it was issued as well as advice that was correct at the time it was issued, but, subsequent to issuance, was invalidated by a change in statutory or constitutional law, by a change in Board regulations, or by a final decision of a court of competent jurisdiction. Prior written advice may not be relied upon subsequent to: (1) the effective date of a change in statutory or constitutional law and Board regulations or the date of a final decision of a court of competent jurisdiction regardless that the Board did not provide notice of such action; or (2) the person receiving a subsequent writing notifying the person that the advice was not valid at the time it was issued or was subsequently rendered invalid. As generally used in this regulation, the term "written advice" includes both written advice provided in a written communication under subdivision (b) below and written advice provided in a prior audit of the person under subdivision (c) below.

**(b) ADVICE PROVIDED IN A WRITTEN COMMUNICATION.**

(1) Advice from the Board provided to the person in a written communication must have been in response to a specific written inquiry from the person seeking relief from liability, or from his or her representative. To be considered a specific written inquiry for purposes of this regulation, representatives must identify the specific person for whom the advice is requested. Such inquiry must have set forth and fully described the facts and circumstances of the activity or transactions for which the advice was requested.

(2) A person may write to the Board and propose a use tax reporting methodology for qualified purchases subject to use tax. If the Board concludes that the reporting method reflects the person's use tax liability for the defined population, then the Board may write to the person approving the use of the reporting method. The approval shall be subject to certain conditions. The following conditions shall be included in the approval:

**(A)** The defined population of the purchases that will be included in the reporting method;

**(B)** The percentage of purchases of the defined population that is subject to tax;

**(C)** The length of time the writing shall remain in effect;

**(D)** The definition of a significant or material change that will require rescinding the approved reporting method; and

**(E)** Other conditions as required.

## Regulation 1705. (Contd.)

The written approval of the use tax reporting methodology is void and shall not be relied upon for the purposes of Revenue and Taxation Code section 6596 if the taxpayer files a claim for refund for tax that had been reported based upon this reporting method.

**(c) WRITTEN ADVICE PROVIDED IN A PRIOR AUDIT.** Presentation of the person's books and records for examination by an auditor shall be deemed to be a written request for the audit report. If a prior audit report of the person requesting relief contains written evidence which demonstrates that the issue in question was examined, either in a sample or census (actual) review, such evidence will be considered "written advice from the Board" for purposes of this regulation. A census (actual) review, as opposed to a sample review, involves examination of 100% of the person's transactions pertaining to the issue in question. For written advice contained in a prior audit of the person to apply to the person's activity or transaction in question, the facts and conditions relating to the activity or transaction must not have changed from those which occurred during the period of operation in the prior audit. Audit comments, schedules, and other writings prepared by the Board that become part of the audit work papers which reflect that the activity or transaction in question was properly reported and no amount was due are sufficient for a finding for relief from liability, unless it can be shown that the person seeking relief knew such advice was erroneous.

**(d) ANNOTATIONS AND LEGAL RULINGS OF COUNSEL.** Advice from the Board provided to the person in the form of an annotation or legal ruling of counsel shall constitute written advice only if:

(1) The underlying legal ruling of counsel involving the fact pattern at issue is addressed to the person or to his or her representative under the conditions set forth in subdivision (b) above; or

(2) The annotation or legal ruling of counsel is provided to the person or his or her representative by the Board within the body of a written communication and involves the same fact pattern as that presented in the subject annotation or legal ruling of counsel.

**(e) TRADE OR INDUSTRY ASSOCIATIONS OR FRANCHISORS.** A trade or industry association requesting advice on behalf of its member(s) must identify and include the specific member name(s) for whom the advice is requested for relief from liability under this regulation. A franchisor requesting advice on behalf of its franchisee(s) must identify and include the specific franchisee name(s) for whom the advice is requested for relief from liability under this regulation.

For an identified trade or industry member or franchisee to receive relief based on advice provided in the written communication to the trade or industry association or franchisor, the activity or transactions in question must involve the same facts and circumstances as those presented in the written inquiry by the association or franchisor.

*History:* Adopted August 1, 1997, effective November 9, 1997.

Amended October 6, 1999, effective January 7, 2000. New subdivision (a)(2) added, old subdivision (2) renumbered to (3). New subdivision (d) added detailing when annotations or legal rulings of counsel constitute written advice. Also new subdivision (e) added concerning the request for written advice made by trade or industry associations on behalf of its members.

Amended February 14, 2001, effective June 22, 2001. Language of current subdivision (b) renumbered (b)(1). New subdivision (b)(2) added.

Amended December 17, 2008, effective April 10, 2009. Amended subdivision (e) concerning a request for written advice made by a franchisor on behalf of its franchisees. Added a second paragraph to clarify that relief may be granted only when the activity or transactions in question involve the same facts and circumstances as those presented in the written inquiry.

*Regulations are issued by the State Board of Equalization to implement, interpret or make specific provisions of the California Sales and Use Tax Law and to aid in the administration and enforcement of that law. If you are in doubt about how the Sales and Use Tax Law applies to your specific activity or transaction, you should write the nearest State Board of Equalization office. Requests for advice regarding a specific activity or transaction should be in writing and should fully describe the facts and circumstances of the activity or transaction.*