

Chapter 70.235 RCW  
Limiting greenhouse gas emissions

RCW Sections

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**70.235.005**  
**Findings — Intent.**

(1) The legislature finds that Washington has long been a national and international leader on energy conservation and environmental stewardship, including air quality protection, renewable energy development and generation, emission standards for fossil-fuel based energy generation, energy efficiency programs, natural resource conservation, vehicle emission standards, and the use of biofuels. Washington is also unique among most states in that in addition to its commitment to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases, it has established goals to grow the clean energy sector and reduce the state's expenditures on imported fuels.

(2) The legislature further finds that Washington should continue its leadership on climate change policy by creating accountability for achieving the emission reductions established in RCW 70.235.020, participating in the design of a regional multisector market-based system to help achieve those emission reductions, assessing other market strategies to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases, and ensuring the state has a well trained workforce for our clean energy future.

(3) It is the intent of the legislature that the state will: (a) Limit and reduce emissions of greenhouse gas consistent with the emission reductions established in RCW 70.235.020; (b) minimize the potential to export pollution, jobs, and economic opportunities; and (c) reduce emissions at the lowest cost to Washington's economy, consumers, and businesses.

(4) In the event the state elects to participate in a regional multisector market-based system, it is the intent of the legislature that the system will become effective by January 1, 2012, after authority is provided to the department for its implementation. By acting now, Washington businesses and citizens will have adequate time and opportunities to be well positioned to take advantage of the low-carbon economy and to make necessary investments in low-carbon technology.

(5) It is also the intent of the legislature that the regional multisector market-based system recognize Washington's unique emissions portfolio, including the state's hydroelectric system, the opportunities presented by Washington's abundant forest resources and agriculture land, and the state's leadership in energy efficiency and the actions it has already taken that have reduced its generation of greenhouse gas emissions and that entities receive appropriate credit for early actions to reduce greenhouse gases.

(6) If any revenues that accrue to the state are created by a market system, they must be used to further the state's efforts to achieve the goals established in RCW 70.235.020, address the impacts of global warming on affected habitats, species, and communities, and increase investment in the clean energy economy particularly for communities and workers that have suffered from heavy job losses and chronic unemployment and underemployment.

[2008 c 14 § 1.]

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**70.235.010**  
**Definitions.**

The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

- (1) "Carbon dioxide equivalents" means a metric measure used to compare the emissions from various greenhouse gases based upon their global warming potential.
- (2) "Climate advisory team" means the stakeholder group formed in response to executive order 07-02.
- (3) "Climate impacts group" means the University of Washington's climate impacts group.
- (4) "Department" means the department of ecology.
- (5) "Director" means the director of the department.
- (6) "Greenhouse gas" and "greenhouse gases" includes carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons, sulfur hexafluoride, and any other gas or gases designated by the department by rule.
- (7) "Person" means an individual, partnership, franchise holder, association, corporation, a state, a city, a county, or any subdivision or instrumentality of the state.
- (8) "Program" means the department's climate change program.
- (9) "Western climate initiative" means the collaboration of states, Canadian provinces, Mexican states, and tribes to design a multisector market-based mechanism as directed under the western regional climate action initiative signed by the governor on February 22, 2007.

[2010 c 146 § 1; 2008 c 14 § 2.]

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**70.235.020**  
**Greenhouse gas emissions reductions — Reporting requirements.**

- (1)(a) The state shall limit emissions of greenhouse gases to achieve the following emission reductions for Washington state:
  - (i) By 2020, reduce overall emissions of greenhouse gases in the state to 1990 levels;
  - (ii) By 2035, reduce overall emissions of greenhouse gases in the state to twenty-five percent below 1990 levels;
  - (iii) By 2050, the state will do its part to reach global climate stabilization levels by reducing overall emissions to fifty percent below 1990 levels, or seventy percent below the state's expected emissions that year.
- (b) By December 1, 2008, the department shall submit a greenhouse gas reduction plan for review and approval to the legislature, describing those actions necessary to achieve the emission reductions in (a) of this subsection by using existing statutory authority and any additional authority granted by the legislature. Actions taken using existing statutory authority may proceed prior to approval of the greenhouse gas reduction plan.
- (c) Except where explicitly stated otherwise, nothing in chapter 14, Laws of 2008 limits any state agency authorities as they existed prior to June 12, 2008.
- (d) Consistent with this directive, the department shall take the following actions:
  - (i) Develop and implement a system for monitoring and reporting emissions of greenhouse gases as required under RCW 70.94.151; and
  - (ii) Track progress toward meeting the emission reductions established in this subsection, including the results from policies currently in effect that have been previously adopted by the state and policies adopted in the future, and report on that progress.
- (2) By December 31st of each even-numbered year beginning in 2010, the department and the \*department of community, trade, and economic development shall report to the governor and the appropriate committees of the senate and house of

representatives the total emissions of greenhouse gases for the preceding two years, and totals in each major source sector. The department shall ensure the reporting rules adopted under RCW 70.94.151 allow it to develop a comprehensive inventory of emissions of greenhouse gases from all significant sectors of the Washington economy.

(3) Except for purposes of reporting, emissions of carbon dioxide from industrial combustion of biomass in the form of fuel wood, wood waste, wood by-products, and wood residuals shall not be considered a greenhouse gas as long as the region's silvicultural sequestration capacity is maintained or increased.

[2008 c 14 § 3.]

**Notes:**

\***Reviser's note:** The "department of community, trade, and economic development" was renamed the "department of commerce" by 2009 c 565.

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**70.235.030**

**Development of a design for a regional multisector market-based system to limit and reduce emissions of greenhouse gas — Information required to be submitted to the legislature.**

(1)(a) The director shall develop, in coordination with the western climate initiative, a design for a regional multisector market-based system to limit and reduce emissions of greenhouse gas consistent with the emission reductions established in RCW 70.235.020(1).

(b) By December 1, 2008, the director and the director of the \*department of community, trade, and economic development shall deliver to the legislature specific recommendations for approval and request for authority to implement the preferred design of a regional multisector market-based system in (a) of this subsection. These recommendations must include:

(i) Proposed legislation, necessary funding, and the schedule necessary to implement the preferred design by January 1, 2012;

(ii) Any changes determined necessary to the reporting requirements established under RCW 70.94.151; and

(iii) Actions that the state should take to prevent manipulation of the multisector market-based system designed under this section.

(2) In developing the design for the regional multisector market-based system under subsection (1) of this section, the department shall consult with the affected state agencies, and provide opportunity for public review and comment.

(3) In addition to the information required under subsection (1)(b) of this section, the director and the director of the \*department of community, trade, and economic development shall submit the following to the legislature by December 1, 2008:

(a) Information on progress to date in achieving the requirements of chapter 14, Laws of 2008;

(b) The final recommendations of the climate advisory team, including recommended most promising actions to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases or otherwise respond to climate change. These recommendations must include strategies to reduce the quantity of emissions of greenhouse gases per distance traveled in the transportation sector;

(c) A request for additional resources and statutory authority needed to limit and reduce emissions of greenhouse gas consistent with chapter 14, Laws of 2008 including implementation of the most promising recommendations of the climate advisory team;

(d) Recommendations on how projects funded by the green energy incentive account in RCW 43.325.040 may be used to expand the electrical transmission infrastructure into urban and rural areas of the state for purposes of allowing the recharging of plug-in hybrid electric vehicles;

(e) Recommendations on how local governments could participate in the multisector market-based system designed under subsection (1) of this section;

(f) Recommendations regarding the circumstances under which generation of electricity or alternative fuel from landfill gas and gas from anaerobic digesters may receive an offset or credit in the regional multisector market-based system or other strategies developed by the department; and

(g) Recommendations developed in consultation with the department of natural resources and the department of agriculture with the climate advisory team, the college of forest resources at the University of Washington, and the Washington State

University, and a nonprofit consortium involved in research on renewable industrial materials, regarding how forestry and agricultural lands and practices may participate voluntarily as an offset or other credit program in the regional multisector market-based system. The recommendations must ensure that the baseline for this offset or credit program does not disadvantage this state in relation to another state or states. These recommendations shall address:

- (i) Commercial and other working forests, including accounting for site-class specific forest management practices;
- (ii) Agricultural and forest products, including accounting for substitution of wood for fossil intensive substitutes;
- (iii) Agricultural land and practices;
- (iv) Forest and agricultural lands set aside or managed for conservation as of, or after, June 12, 2008; and
- (v) Reforestation and afforestation projects.

[2008 c 14 § 4.]

**Notes:**

**\*Reviser's note:** The "department of community, trade, and economic development" was renamed the "department of commerce" by 2009 c 565.

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### 70.235.040

#### Consultation with climate impacts group at the University of Washington — Report to the legislature.

Within eighteen months of the next and each successive global or national assessment of climate change science, the department shall consult with the climate impacts group at the University of Washington regarding the science on human-caused climate change and provide a report to the legislature summarizing that science and make recommendations regarding whether the greenhouse gas emissions reductions required under RCW 70.235.020 need to be updated.

[2008 c 14 § 7.]

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### 70.235.050

#### Greenhouse gas emission limits for state agencies — Timeline — Reports — Strategy — Point of accountability employee for energy and climate change initiatives.

(1) All state agencies shall meet the statewide greenhouse gas emission limits established in RCW 70.235.020 to achieve the following, using the estimates and strategy established in subsections (2) and (3) of this section:

- (a) By July 1, 2020, reduce emissions by fifteen percent from 2005 emission levels;
- (b) By 2035, reduce emissions to thirty-six percent below 2005 levels; and
- (c) By 2050, reduce emissions to the greater reduction of fifty-seven and one-half percent below 2005 levels, or seventy percent below the expected state government emissions that year.

(2)(a) By June 30, 2010, all state agencies shall report estimates of emissions for 2005 to the department, including 2009 levels of emissions, and projected emissions through 2035.

(b) State agencies required to report under RCW 70.94.151 must estimate emissions from methodologies recommended by the department and must be based on actual operation of those agencies. Agencies not required to report under RCW 70.94.151 shall derive emissions estimates using an emissions calculator provided by the department.

(3) By June 30, 2011, each state agency shall submit to the department a strategy to meet the requirements in subsection (1) of this section. The strategy must address employee travel activities, teleconferencing alternatives, and include existing and proposed actions, a timeline for reductions, and recommendations for budgetary and other incentives to reduce emissions, especially from employee business travel.

(4) By October 1st of each even-numbered year beginning in 2012, each state agency shall report to the department the actions taken to meet the emission reduction targets under the strategy for the preceding fiscal biennium. The department may

authorize the department of general administration to report on behalf of any state agency having fewer than five hundred full-time equivalent employees at any time during the reporting period. The department shall cooperate with the department of general administration and the \*department of community, trade, and economic development to develop consolidated reporting methodologies that incorporate emission reduction actions taken across all or substantially all state agencies.

(5) All state agencies shall cooperate in providing information to the department, the department of general administration, and the \*department of community, trade, and economic development for the purposes of this section.

(6) The governor shall designate a person as the single point of accountability for all energy and climate change initiatives within state agencies. This position must be funded from current full-time equivalent allocations without increasing budgets or staffing levels. If duties must be shifted within an agency, they must be shifted among current full-time equivalent allocations. All agencies, councils, or work groups with energy or climate change initiatives shall coordinate with this designee.

[2009 c 519 § 2.]

**Notes:**

\***Reviser's note:** The "department of community, trade, and economic development" was renamed the "department of commerce" by 2009 c 565.

**Findings -- 2009 c 519:** See RCW 43.21M.900.

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**70.235.060**

**Emissions calculator for estimating aggregate emissions — Reports.**

(1) The department shall develop an emissions calculator to assist state agencies in estimating aggregate emissions as well as in estimating the relative emissions from different ways in carrying out activities.

(2) The department may use data such as totals of building space occupied, energy purchases and generation, motor vehicle fuel purchases and total mileage driven, and other reasonable sources of data to make these estimates. The estimates may be derived from a single methodology using these or other factors, except that for the top ten state agencies in occupied building space and vehicle miles driven, the estimates must be based upon the actual and projected operations of those agencies. The estimates may be adjusted, and reasonable estimates derived, when agencies have been created since 1990 or functions reorganized among state agencies since 1990. The estimates may incorporate projected emissions reductions that also affect state agencies under the program authorized in RCW 70.235.020 and other existing policies that will result in emissions reductions.

(3) By December 31st of each even-numbered year beginning in 2010, the department shall report to the governor and to the appropriate committees of the senate and house of representatives the total state agencies' emissions of greenhouse gases for 2005 and the preceding two years and actions taken to meet the emissions reduction targets.

[2009 c 519 § 5.]

**Notes:**

**Findings -- 2009 c 519:** See RCW 43.21M.900.

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**70.235.070**

**Distribution of funds for infrastructure and capital development projects — Prerequisites.**

Beginning in 2010, when distributing capital funds through competitive programs for infrastructure and economic development projects, all state agencies must consider whether the entity receiving the funds has adopted policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Agencies also must consider whether the project is consistent with:

(1) The state's limits on the emissions of greenhouse gases established in RCW 70.235.020;

(2) Statewide goals to reduce annual per capita vehicle miles traveled by 2050, in accordance with RCW 47.01.440, except that the agency shall consider whether project locations in rural counties, as defined in RCW 43.160.020, will maximize the reduction of vehicle miles traveled; and

(3) Applicable federal emissions reduction requirements.

[2009 c 519 § 9.]

**Notes:**

**Findings -- 2009 c 519:** See RCW 43.21M.900.

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**70.235.900**

**Scope of chapter 14, Laws of 2008.**

Except where explicitly stated otherwise, nothing in chapter 14, Laws of 2008 alters or limits any authorities of the department as they existed prior to June 12, 2008.

[2008 c 14 § 11.]

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**70.235.901**

**Severability — 2008 c 14.**

If any provision of this act or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of the act or the application of the provision to other persons or circumstances is not affected.

[2008 c 14 § 12.]