



Access to Public Records Policy & Procedure

Number: FI09



Policy and Procedure Statement

This policy and procedure address public access to Port of Tacoma (Port) and Northwest Seaport Alliance (NWSA) records as required under the Washington State Public Records Act (PRA) [RCW 42.56.040](#) and guides Port and NWSA staff involvement in the public records process.

Purpose

The Port and NWSA are committed to public accountability and conducting business in a transparent way. This policy and procedure define the way by which the Port and NWSA fulfill public records requests consistent with the Washington State Public Records Act (PRA) [RCW 42.56.040](#)

Scope

This policy and procedure is intended to aid the public in accessing public records and guide Port and NWSA staff in processing public records requests.

Definitions

The following definitions apply to this policy and procedure in addition to the definitions in RCW 42.56.010:

TERM	DEFINITION
Exempt Record	Any record or portion of a record that is not subject to public disclosure, inspection, and copying due to a specific exemption or prohibition from disclosure by state or federal law.
Identifiable Record	A public record that agency staff can locate after an objectively reasonable search and that is in existence at the time a public records request is made.
Public Record	Records, regardless of physical form or characteristics, that contain information relating to the conduct of government or the performance of any governmental or proprietary function prepared, owned, used, or retained by an agency.
Public Records Officer	The individual designated by the agency to oversee compliance with the Public Records Act (PRA).
Public Records Request	A request submitted to an agency seeking access to identifiable record(s).
Records Program Manager	The individual who oversees the agency records program, including responses to public records request and records management.

Records Specialist	The individual responsible for processing public records requests for the agency.
Subject Matter Expert	Agency staff responsible for working with the Records team on reviewing, identifying, and compiling public records within their area of expertise.

Agency Responsibilities

The Records Program Manager is designated as the agency Public Records Officer under Port Resolution 2023-11-PT and NWSA Resolution 2023-05. This individual oversees compliance with the PRA and ensures that responding to public records requests does not interfere with the other essential functions of the agency. The Public Records Officer may designate other staff including but not limited to the Records Specialist to process public records requests.

The Records Specialist is designated by the Records Program Manager as the primary individual who processes public records requests for the agency. This individual will communicate directly with the requester; coordinate with Subject Matter Expert(s) to identify and collect potentially responsive records; and prepare responsive records for release including handling any applicable redactions and/or exemptions.

The Records Program Manager and Records Specialist shall work with staff, including those identified as Subject Matter Expert, to conduct a reasonable search to identify and collect potentially responsive records.

Staff who receive a public records request directly should immediately upon receipt forward the request to either publicrecordsrequest@portoftacoma.com (Port) or publicdisclosure@nwseaportalliance.com (NWSA) or contact the Records Program Manager or Records Specialist. Port and NWSA staff understand that public records requests require an initial response to the requester within 5 business days of receipt.

Staff, under the guidance of the Records Program Manager, will manage agency records throughout their life cycle, including creation, use, retention, storage, retrieval, protection and disposition in accordance with RCW42.56 and any applicable state, local, or other required retention schedules. Staff will protect records in their possession or under their control from intentional damage, disorganization, or loss.

All Port and NWSA staff will receive training on public records compliance and records retention. Training typically includes an initial training session within sixty days of their start date and annual refresher training.

Making a Public Records Request

The Port/NWSA encourage requesters to submit public records requests via the NextRequest portal, which is the fastest and easiest way to submit a public records request to the Port/NWSA.

Port of Tacoma: <https://portoftacoma.nextrequest.com/>

Northwest Seaport Alliance: <https://nwseaportalliance.nextrequest.com/>

A public records request can also be submitted in one of the following ways:

Port of Tacoma:

Mail: Port of Tacoma
Attention: Public Records Officer
P.O. Box 1837
Tacoma, WA 98401

In Person: Port of Tacoma
1 Sitcum Plaza
Tacoma, WA 98421

Email: publicrecordsrequest@portoftacoma.com
Phone: 253-428-8639

Northwest Seaport Alliance:

Mail: Northwest Seaport Alliance
Attention: Public Records Officer
P.O. Box 2985
Tacoma, WA 98401

In Person: Port of Tacoma
1 Sitcum Plaza
Tacoma, WA 98421

Email: publicdisclosure@nwseaportalliance.com
Phone: 253-428-8639

Requests not submitted via the portal will be input and processed in the portal for tracking.

Providing the following information will aid the agency in responding to your request:

- Name, address, email address, and phone number (this allows the agency to contact you regarding your request).
- Description of the records being requested (the more detailed and specific the request, the easier it can be to quickly identify and locate the requested records).
- Date range of requested records (a date range helps to narrow down the search).
- Any known specifics (project name/number; location/address; incident or report number, etc.).

Many records are available via the agency websites. Requestors are encouraged to view readily available records prior to submitting a public records request.

Port of Tacoma: <https://www.portoftacoma.com/>

Northwest Seaport Alliance: <https://www.nwseaportalliance.com/>

If at any time after a public records request is submitted the requester does not wish to proceed with their request for any reason, the requester may notify the Port/NWSA of their desire to withdraw their request via any of the above contact methods. If a request to withdraw is received by the Port/NWSA, the request will be confirmed in writing and the request closed.

Agency Response to Public Records Request

The Port and NWSA are committed to providing the fullest assistance to requesters as required under the PRA.

Initial Response

Within five (5) business days of receipt of a request, the Port/NWSA will respond in at least one of the following ways:

- Provide the records (or a link to the portion of our website that contains the records).
- Request clarification if the request is unclear or does not sufficiently identify the requested records.
- Provide a reasonable time estimate for the search and production of any potential responsive records.
- Deny the request in whole or in part.
- Close the request advising a reasonable search was conducted and no responsive records were identified.

Anonymous Requests

Requesters have the right to remain anonymous and not to provide contact information when submitting a public records request. A requester has the option to provide name, address, email address, and phone number. Providing a physical address, email address, or a phone number, will allow the Records Specialist to contact the requester for clarification or to otherwise discuss their request. Failure to provide contact information means that the request will be processed through NextRequest, all communication and records will be publicly posted for a period of 30 days, and it is the requester's responsibility to check NextRequest for communication and records.

Successive Requests

While a public records request is pending from one requester, that requester may submit one or more additional public records requests. However, the Port/NWSA has the discretion not to work simultaneously on more than one request per requester at a time. When a requester has simultaneously submitted multiple, separate requests or makes one or more additional requests when previous requests are open, all requests from that person will be queued in the order in which they were received, with the request submitted earliest in time address prior to any subsequent requests. The Port/NWSA is not required to work on an additional request until prior requests are completed and closed.

Request for Clarification

The Records Specialist may seek clarification of one or more aspects of a public records request. In seeking clarification, the Records Specialist will either attempt to provide a reasonable interpretation of that request and seek confirmation that the proposed interpretation is accurate or seek additional information about what public records the requester is seeking. In either situation, the Records Specialist will provide a date by when the requester should provide the needed clarification.

If a requester does not respond to the request for clarification by the date indicated, the Records Specialist will continue to process the request by applying a reasonable interpretation of the request. If it is not reasonably possible to interpret what public records are being request, the Records Specialist will notify the requester that due to the failure to respond, the request will be closed. If portions of the request do not require clarification, those portions of the request will be processed.

Request for Information

A request for information is not a request for public records and the Port/NWSA are not required to respond to requests for information. If a request is received that is deemed to be a request for information and not for identifiable records, the requester will be notified in writing and the request closed.

Providing Records in Installments

The Port and NWSA may provide records in installments after determining there is a reasonable need to do so, including for practical considerations like volume, complexity, or workload. If an installment of records is not accessed via the NextRequest portal by the requester within 30 days of release of that installment to the requester, the requester will be notified in writing that the request is deemed abandoned and the request closed.

Electronic Records

The Port and NWSA strive to provide records electronically for ease of access. Responses to public records requests will be provided electronically via the NextRequest portal unless otherwise requested. Based on volume and record type, records may be provided on a thumb drive, disk, via an FTP (file transfer), or other agreeable electronic method. Records may be provided in their native format but are not required to be provided in native format unless so requested and redactions are not necessary. The Public Records Act does not require an agency to convert records for ease of requester access.

Inspection of Records

If a requester would prefer to inspect the records in person, they may coordinate with the Records Specialist to schedule a mutually agreeable day and time to inspect the records in the presence of Port or NWSA staff at the Port Administration Building at no cost. Inspection must occur at the Port/NWSA's administration building during the Port/NWSA's normal business hours, Monday-Friday, 8:00am-5:00pm, except legal holidays. If the requester does not appear for a scheduled inspection, the Records Specialist will attempt to re-schedule the inspection. If the requester does not appear for a second inspection, or more than 30 days pass after the Records Specialist began

attempting to coordinate an inspection without any response, the requester will be notified in writing that the request is deemed abandoned and the request closed.

Port/NWSA records cannot be removed from Port/NWSA facilities, defaced or otherwise destroyed.

The requester may flag in a non-permanent way particular records which they would like copied. A copying charge may be assessed based on the fee schedule in place at the time copies are requested. Depending on volume and complexity of records, a deposit may be required prior to copying and same day copying may not be possible. Once copies are available, the Records Specialist will notify the requester. If copies are not retrieved within 30 days, the requester will be notified in writing that the request is deemed abandoned and the request closed.

Exempt Records

The Port /NWSA are not required to permit public disclosure, inspection, or copying of records that are exempt in whole or in part under RCW 42.56 or other state or federal statute or regulation. If only a portion of a record is determined to be exempt, that portion of the record will be redacted, and the record will be provided. If a record is entirely exempt, the entire record will be withheld. The Records Specialist will prepare an exemption log listing exempt records or parts of records, the applicable exemption, and a brief explanation of the exemption.

RCW 42.56 prohibits the disclosure of lists of individuals for commercial purposes. If a request is received for a list of individuals, that is not otherwise exempt from disclosure, the Port/NWSA may require the requester to certify in writing that they will not use the list of individuals for commercial purposes before providing the list.

Notice to Third Parties

If a requested record contains personal or proprietary information that identifies an individual or organization, the Port/NWSA may notify the individual or organization to allow the third party to seek relief pursuant to RCW 42.56.540. Third party notice may be sent if it is determined that releasing the record could damage the individual or organization, government operations, or is not in the best interest of the public.

The Port/NWSA will take this notice period into account when providing an estimate of when the records will be available. The Port/NWSA will release the record(s) by the specific date if no injunction prohibits release of the records.

No Duty to Create Records

The Port/NWSA are not required to create a new record to satisfy a public records request.

No Duty to Supplement Response

The Port/NWSA are not required to hold open a public records request for records that may be created or received in the future. If a public record is created or received after a request is

received, it is not responsive to the request and will not be provided. A new request must be made to obtain newly created or received records.

Certified Copies

The Port/NWSA are not required to certify copies of public records and therefore do not provide certified copies.

Request Closure

A public records request may be closed in many ways as noted throughout this policy and procedure. Once a request is closed, any subsequent request by the same person for the same or almost identical records will be processed as a new request unless it is determined by the Records Specialist that the initial request should be reopened. Any email closing a public records request will include the following items:

- A statement identifying that the request has been fulfilled and why the request is being closed, for instance because all responsive records have been produced or because a deadline has lapsed (for payment of copy charges, collection of records, or to provide clarification);
- A statement that the one-year statute of limitations to seek judicial review has started to run; and
- An invitation to ask follow-up questions within the next 30 days following the closure notice.

Later Discovered Records

If after a request has been closed by the Port/NWSA, the Port/NWSA becomes aware of additional responsive public records, the requester will be notified of the additional records, and the records provided to the requester.

Appeal Process for Denial of Records

Fee Schedule

If the Port/NWSA charges for copies, the charges will be based on the statutory fee schedule in RCW 42.56.070 and RCW 42.56.120.

A deposit of up to 10% of the estimated cost may be required for large volume and/or complex copy requests if the estimated cost exceeds \$25. Copying will not begin until the deposit is received.

When records are being produced in installments, the Port/NWSA may require payment before the installment is provided. If payment is not received within 30 days of notification of payment due, the requester will be notified in writing that the request is deemed abandoned and the request closed.

Records Index

The Port and NWSA find that it would be unduly burdensome and would interfere with agency operations to maintain an index of records.

References

[RCW 42.56](#)

Approval



Eric Johnson, PoT Executive Director

Nov 12, 2025

Date



John Wolfe, NWSA Chief Executive Officer

11/12/2025

Date

History

DATE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF CHANGE(S)
10/28/2025	Initial publication (Combination of 7005 Access to Public Records Procedure and IT03 Access to the Northwest Seaport Alliance Public Records – with substantive revisions)

Next Review: 11/01/2026