

1 claiming certain privilege; establishing
2 determination of district court as subject to certain
3 appeal; establishing exceptions to certain privilege
4 for audit documents; providing exception to waiver in
5 certain circumstances; authorizing agency to review
6 certain information; requiring notification for
7 certain privileged information; requiring court to
8 suppress privileged information in certain
9 circumstances; authorizing court to find certain
10 persons in contempt of court; providing immunity for
11 certain persons; establishing provisions of voluntary
12 disclosure of audit information or report; requiring
13 certain certification for voluntary disclosure;
14 requiring certain notice to potential purchaser;
15 providing exceptions to immunity; establishing
16 mitigating factors for certain penalty; establishing
17 circumstances required for developing a pattern;
18 requiring certain notification to regulatory agency;
19 establishing required information in notification;
20 establishing applicability of act; providing for
21 codification; and providing an effective date.

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BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

SECTION 1. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified
in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 1-4-110 of Title 27A, unless
there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Oklahoma
Environmental, Health and Safety Audit Privilege Act".

SECTION 2. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified
in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 1-4-111 of Title 27A, unless
there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

A. The purpose of this act is to encourage voluntary compliance
with environmental and occupational health and safety laws.

1 B. A regulatory agency in this state shall not adopt a rule or
2 impose a condition that circumvents the purpose of this act.

3 SECTION 3. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified
4 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 1-4-112 of Title 27A, unless
5 there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

6 A. As used in this act:

7 1. "Acquisition closing date" means the date on which ownership
8 of, or a direct or indirect majority interest in the ownership of, a
9 regulated facility or operation is acquired in an asset purchase,
10 equity purchase, merger or similar transaction;

11 2. "Audit report" means the final report in a written document
12 which contains the comments and recommendations of the auditor;

13 3. "Environmental or health and safety audit" or "audit" means
14 a systematic voluntary evaluation, review or assessment of
15 compliance with environmental or health and safety laws or with any
16 permit issued under an environmental or health and safety law
17 conducted by an owner or operator, an employee of an owner or
18 operator, a person, including an employee or independent contractor
19 of the person, that is considering the acquisition of a regulated
20 facility or operation, or an independent contractor of:

- 21 a. a regulated facility or operation, or
- 22 b. an activity at a regulated facility or operation;

23 4. "Environmental or health and safety law" means:
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1 a. a federal or state environmental or occupational
2 health and safety law, or

3 b. a rule, regulation or regional or local law adopted in
4 conjunction with a law described by subparagraph a of
5 this paragraph;

6 5. "Owner or operator" means a person who owns or operates a
7 regulated facility or operation;

8 6. "Penalty" means an administrative, civil or criminal
9 sanction imposed by the state to punish a person for a violation of
10 a statute or rule. The term does not include a technical or
11 remedial provision ordered by a regulatory authority; and

12 7. "Regulated facility or operation" means a facility or
13 operation that is regulated under an environmental or health and
14 safety law.

15 B. A person acts willfully for purposes of this act if the
16 person acts willfully within the meaning of Section 92 of Title 21
17 of the Oklahoma Statutes.

18 C. A person acts knowingly for purposes of this act if the
19 person acts knowingly within the meaning of Section 96 of Title 21
20 of the Oklahoma Statutes.

21 To fully implement the privilege established by this act, the
22 term "environmental or health and safety law" shall be construed
23 broadly.
24

1 SECTION 4. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified
2 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 1-4-113 of Title 27A, unless
3 there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

4 A. An audit report is a report that includes each document and
5 communication, other than those set forth in Section 8 of this act,
6 produced from an environmental or health and safety audit.

7 B. General components that may be contained in a completed
8 audit report include:

9 1. A report prepared by an auditor, monitor or similar person,
10 which may include:

- 11 a. a description of the scope of the audit,
- 12 b. the information gained in the audit and findings,
13 conclusions and recommendations, and
- 14 c. exhibits and appendices;

15 2. Memoranda and documents analyzing all or a portion of the
16 materials described by paragraph 1 of this subsection or discussing
17 implementation issues; and

18 3. An implementation plan or tracking system to correct past
19 noncompliance, improve current compliance or prevent future
20 noncompliance.

21 C. The types of exhibits and appendices that may be contained
22 in an audit report include supporting information that is collected
23 or developed for the primary purpose of and in the course of an
24 environmental or health and safety audit, including:

- 1 1. Interviews with current or former employees;
- 2 2. Field notes and records of observations;
- 3 3. Findings, opinions, suggestions, conclusions, guidance,
- 4 notes, drafts and memoranda;
- 5 4. Legal analyses;
- 6 5. Drawings;
- 7 6. Photographs;
- 8 7. Laboratory analyses and other analytical data;
- 9 8. Computer-generated or electronically recorded information;
- 10 9. Maps, charts, graphs and surveys; and
- 11 10. Other communications associated with an environmental or
- 12 health and safety audit.

13 D. To facilitate identification, each document in an audit
14 report should be labeled "COMPLIANCE REPORT: PRIVILEGED DOCUMENT,"
15 or labeled with words of similar import. Failure to label a
16 document under this section does not constitute a waiver of the
17 audit privilege or create a presumption that the privilege does or
18 does not apply.

19 E. Unless an extension is approved by the governmental entity
20 with regulatory authority over the regulated facility or operation
21 based on reasonable grounds, an environmental or health and safety
22 audit must be completed within a reasonable time not to exceed six
23 months after:

- 24 1. The date the audit is initiated; or

1 2. The acquisition closing date, if the person continues the
2 audit.

3 F. Paragraph 1 of subsection E of this section does not apply
4 to an environmental or health and safety audit conducted before the
5 acquisition closing date by a potential purchaser that is
6 considering the acquisition of the regulated facility or operation.

7 SECTION 5. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified
8 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 1-4-114 of Title 27A, unless
9 there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

10 A. An audit report is privileged as provided in this section.

11 B. Except as provided in Sections 6 through 9 of this act, any
12 part of an audit report is privileged and is not admissible as
13 evidence or subject to discovery in:

14 1. A civil action, whether legal or equitable; or

15 2. An administrative proceeding.

16 C. A person, when called or subpoenaed as a witness, may not be
17 compelled to testify or produce a document related to an
18 environmental or health and safety audit if:

19 1. The testimony or document discloses any item listed in
20 Section 4 of this act that was made as part of the preparation of an
21 environmental or health and safety audit report and that is
22 addressed in a privileged part of an audit report; and

23 2. The person is:
24

- 1 a. a person who conducted any portion of the audit but
- 2 did not personally observe the physical events,
- 3 b. a person to whom the audit results are disclosed under
- 4 Section 6 of this act, or
- 5 c. a custodian of the audit results.

6 D. A person who conducts or participates in the preparation of
7 an environmental or health and safety audit and who has actually
8 observed physical events of violation may testify about those events
9 but may not be compelled to testify about or produce documents
10 related to the preparation of or any privileged part of an
11 environmental or health and safety audit or any item listed in
12 Section 4 of this act.

13 E. An employee of a state agency may not request, review or
14 otherwise use an audit report during an agency inspection of a
15 regulated facility or operation, or an activity of a regulated
16 facility or operation.

17 F. A party asserting the privilege described in this section
18 has the burden of establishing the applicability of the privilege.

19 G. No audit report or any associated information or records
20 shall be subject to Section 24A.1 et seq. of Title 51 of the
21 Oklahoma Statutes. All records collected pursuant to this act shall
22 be deemed confidential.

1 SECTION 6. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified
2 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 1-4-115 of Title 27A, unless
3 there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

4 A. The privilege described by Section 5 of this act does not
5 apply to the extent the privilege is expressly waived by the owner
6 or operator who prepared the audit report or caused the report to be
7 prepared.

8 B. Disclosure of an audit report or any information generated
9 by an environmental or health and safety audit does not waive the
10 privilege established by Section 5 of this act if the disclosure:

11 1. Is made to address or correct a matter raised by the
12 environmental or health and safety audit and is made only to:

- 13 a. a person employed by the owner or operator, including
14 temporary and contract employees,
- 15 b. a legal representative of the owner or operator,
- 16 c. an officer or director of the regulated facility or
17 operation or a partner of the owner or operator,
- 18 d. an independent contractor retained by the owner or
19 operator,
- 20 e. a person considering the acquisition of the regulated
21 facility or operation that is the subject of the
22 audit, or
- 23 f. an employee, temporary employee, contract employee,
24 legal representative, officer, director, partner or

1 independent contractor of a person described in
2 subparagraph e of this paragraph;

3 2. Is made under the terms of a confidentiality agreement
4 between the person for whom the audit report was prepared or the
5 owner or operator of the audited facility or operation and:

6 a. a partner or potential partner of the owner or
7 operator of the facility or operation,

8 b. a transferee or potential transferee of the facility
9 or operation,

10 c. a lender or potential lender for the facility or
11 operation,

12 d. a governmental official of a state agency, or

13 e. a person engaged in the business of insuring,
14 underwriting or indemnifying the facility or
15 operation; or

16 3. Is made under a claim of confidentiality to a governmental
17 official or agency by the person for whom the audit report was
18 prepared or by the owner or operator.

19 C. A party to a confidentiality agreement described in
20 paragraph 2 of subsection B of this section who violates that
21 agreement is liable for damages caused by the disclosure and for any
22 other penalties stipulated in the confidentiality agreement.

23 D. Information that is disclosed under paragraph 3 of
24 subsection B of this section is confidential and is not subject to

1 disclosure under Section 24A.1 et seq. of Title 51 of the Oklahoma
2 Statutes. A public entity, public employee or public official who
3 discloses information in violation of this subsection is subject to
4 penalty. It is an affirmative defense to the clerical dissemination
5 of a privileged audit report that the report was not clearly labeled
6 "COMPLIANCE REPORT: PRIVILEGED DOCUMENT" or words of similar
7 import. The lack of labeling may not be raised as a defense if the
8 entity, employee or official knew or had reason to know that the
9 document was a privileged audit report.

10 E. This section may not be construed to circumvent the
11 protections provided by federal or state law for individuals who
12 disclose information to law enforcement authorities.

13 SECTION 7. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified
14 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 1-4-116 of Title 27A, unless
15 there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

16 A. A court or administrative hearings official with competent
17 jurisdiction may require disclosure of a portion of an audit report
18 in a civil or administrative proceeding if the court or
19 administrative hearings official determines, after an in camera
20 review consistent with the appropriate rules of procedure, that:

- 21 1. The privilege is asserted for a fraudulent purpose;
- 22 2. The portion of the audit report is not subject to the
23 privilege under Section 8 of this act; or

24

1 3. The portion of the audit report shows evidence of
2 noncompliance with an environmental or health and safety law and
3 appropriate efforts to achieve compliance with the law were not
4 promptly initiated and pursued with reasonable diligence after
5 discovery of noncompliance.

6 B. A party seeking disclosure under this section has the burden
7 of proving that paragraph 1, 2 or 3 of subsection A of this section
8 applies.

9 C. Notwithstanding Section 250 et seq. of Title 75 of the
10 Oklahoma Statutes, a decision of an administrative hearings official
11 under paragraph 1, 2 or 3 of subsection A of this section is
12 directly appealable to a court of competent jurisdiction without
13 disclosure of the audit report to any person unless so ordered by
14 the court.

15 D. A person claiming the privilege is subject to sanctions as
16 provided by Section 3226.1 of Title 12 of the Oklahoma Statutes if
17 the court finds that the person willfully or knowingly claimed the
18 privilege for information as provided in Section 8 of this act.

19 E. A determination of a court under this section is subject to
20 interlocutory appeal to an appropriate appellate court.

21 SECTION 8. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified
22 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 1-4-117 of Title 27A, unless
23 there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

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1 A. The privilege established by Section 5 of this act does not
2 apply to:

3 1. A document, communication, datum or report or other
4 information required by a regulatory agency to be collected,
5 developed, maintained or reported under a federal or state
6 environmental or health and safety law;

7 2. Information obtained by observation, sampling or monitoring
8 by a regulatory agency; or

9 3. Information obtained from a source not involved in the
10 preparation of the environmental or health and safety audit report.

11 B. This section does not limit the right of a person to agree
12 to conduct and disclose an audit report.

13 SECTION 9. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified
14 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 1-4-118 of Title 27A, unless
15 there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

16 A. If an audit report is obtained, reviewed or used in a
17 criminal proceeding, the administrative or civil evidentiary
18 privilege established by Section 5 of this act is not waived or
19 eliminated for any other purpose.

20 B. Notwithstanding the privilege established by Section 5 of
21 this act, a regulatory agency may review information that is
22 required to be available under a specific state or federal law, but
23 that review does not waive or eliminate the administrative or civil
24 evidentiary privilege if applicable.

1 C. If information is required to be available to the public by
2 operation of a specific state or federal law, the governmental
3 authority shall notify the person claiming the privilege of the
4 potential for public disclosure before obtaining the information
5 under subsection A or B of this section.

6 D. If privileged information is disclosed under subsection B or
7 C of this section on the motion of a party, a court or the
8 appropriate administrative official shall suppress evidence offered
9 in any civil or administrative proceeding that arises or is derived
10 from review, disclosure or use of information obtained under this
11 section unless the review, disclosure or use is authorized under
12 Section 8 of this act. A party having received information under
13 subsection B or C of this section has the burden of proving that the
14 evidence offered did not arise and was not derived from the review
15 of privileged information.

16 SECTION 10. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified
17 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 1-4-119 of Title 27A, unless
18 there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

19 A. Except as otherwise provided by this act, a person who makes
20 a voluntary disclosure of a violation of an environmental or health
21 and safety law is immune from an administrative or civil penalty for
22 the violation disclosed.

23 B. A disclosure is voluntary only if:

24 1. The disclosure was made:

- 1 a. promptly after knowledge of the information disclosed
2 is obtained by the person making the disclosure, and
3 b. no later than forty-five (45) days after the
4 acquisition closing date, if the violation was
5 discovered during an audit conducted before the
6 acquisition closing date by a person considering the
7 acquisition of the regulated facility or operation;

8 2. Notice of the disclosure was made in writing by certified
9 mail to an agency that has regulatory authority with regard to the
10 violation disclosed;

11 3. An investigation of the violation was not initiated or the
12 violation was not independently detected by an agency with
13 enforcement jurisdiction before the disclosure was made using
14 certified mail;

15 4. The disclosure arises out of a voluntary environmental or
16 health and safety audit;

17 5. The person who makes the disclosure initiates an appropriate
18 effort to achieve compliance, pursues that effort with due
19 diligence, and corrects the noncompliance within a reasonable time;

20 6. The person making the disclosure cooperates with the
21 appropriate agency in connection with an investigation of the issues
22 identified in the disclosure; and

23 7. The violation did not result in:
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1 a. injury or imminent and substantial risk of serious
2 injury to one or more persons at the site, or

3 b. off-site substantial harm or imminent and substantial
4 risk of harm to persons, property, or the environment.

5 C. For a disclosure described in subparagraph b of paragraph 1
6 of subsection B of this section, the person making the disclosure
7 must certify in the disclosure that before the acquisition closing
8 date:

9 1. The person was not responsible for the environmental,
10 health, or safety compliance at the regulated facility or operation
11 that is subject to the disclosure;

12 2. The person did not have the largest ownership share of the
13 seller;

14 3. The seller did not have the largest ownership share of the
15 person; and

16 4. The person and the seller did not have a common corporate
17 parent or a common majority interest owner.

18 D. A disclosure is not voluntary for purposes of this section
19 if it is a report to a regulatory agency required solely by a
20 specific condition of an enforcement order or decree.

21 E. The immunity established by subsection A of this section
22 does not apply and an administrative or civil penalty may be imposed
23 under applicable law if:

1 1. The person who made the disclosure willfully or knowingly
2 committed or was responsible within the meaning of state laws for
3 the commission of the disclosed violation;

4 2. The person who made the disclosure recklessly committed or
5 was responsible within the meaning of state laws for the commission
6 of the disclosed violation and the violation resulted in substantial
7 injury to one or more persons at the site or off-site harm to
8 persons, property or the environment;

9 3. The offense was committed willfully or knowingly by a member
10 of the person's management or an agent of the person and the
11 person's policies or lack of prevention systems contributed
12 materially to the occurrence of the violation;

13 4. The offense was committed recklessly by a member of the
14 person's management or an agent of the person, the person's policies
15 or lack of prevention systems contributed materially to the
16 occurrence of the violation, and the violation resulted in
17 substantial injury to one or more persons at the site or off-site
18 harm to persons, property or the environment; or

19 5. The violation has resulted in a substantial economic benefit
20 that gives the violator a clear advantage over its business
21 competitors.

22 F. A penalty that is imposed under subsection D of this section
23 should, to the extent appropriate, be mitigated by factors such as:

24 1. The voluntariness of the disclosure;

1 2. Efforts by the disclosing party to conduct environmental or
2 health and safety audits;

3 3. Remediation;

4 4. Cooperation with government officials investigating the
5 disclosed violation;

6 5. The period of ownership of the regulated facility or
7 operation; or

8 6. Other relevant considerations.

9 G. In a civil or administrative enforcement action brought
10 against a person for a violation for which the person claims to have
11 made a voluntary disclosure, the person claiming the immunity has
12 the burden of establishing a prima facie case that the disclosure
13 was voluntary. After the person claiming the immunity establishes a
14 prima facie case of voluntary disclosure, other than a case in which
15 under subsections D and E of this section immunity does not apply,
16 the enforcement authority has the burden of rebutting the
17 presumption by a preponderance of the evidence.

18 H. In order to receive immunity under this section, a facility
19 conducting an environmental or health and safety audit under this
20 act must give notice to an appropriate regulatory agency of the fact
21 that it is planning to commence the audit. The notice shall specify
22 the facility or portion of the facility to be audited, the
23 anticipated time the audit will begin and the general scope of the
24

1 audit. The notice may provide notification of more than one
2 scheduled environmental or health and safety audit at a time.

3 I. In order to receive immunity under this section, a potential
4 purchaser:

5 1. That acquires a regulated facility or operation that is the
6 subject of an audit begun prior to acquisition may continue the
7 audit after the acquisition closing date if, no later than forty-
8 five (45) days after the acquisition closing date, the person
9 provides notice to an appropriate regulatory agency of the fact that
10 the potential purchaser intends to continue the ongoing audit;

11 2. The notice must specify:

- 12 a. the facility or portion of the facility being audited,
- 13 b. the date the audit began, and
- 14 c. the general scope of the audit; and

15 3. The potential purchaser must certify that before the
16 acquisition closing date:

- 17 a. the potential purchaser was not responsible for the
18 scope of the environmental, health, or safety
19 compliance being audited at the regulated facility of
20 operation,
- 21 b. the potential purchaser did not have the largest
22 ownership share of the seller,
- 23 c. the seller did not have the largest ownership share of
24 the potential purchaser, and

1 d. the potential purchaser and the seller did not have a
2 common corporate parent or a common majority interest
3 owner.

4 J. The immunity under this section does not apply if a court or
5 administrative law judge finds that the person claiming the immunity
6 has, after the effective date of this act:

7 1. Repeatedly or continuously committed significant violations;
8 and

9 2. Not attempted to bring the facility or operation into
10 compliance, so as to constitute a pattern of disregard of
11 environmental or health and safety laws.

12 For violations to be considered a pattern, the person shall have
13 committed a series of violations that were due to separate and
14 distinct events occurring within a three-year period at the same
15 facility or operation.

16 SECTION 11. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified
17 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 1-4-120 of Title 27A, unless
18 there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

19 The privilege established by this act applies to environmental
20 or health and safety audits that are conducted on or after the
21 effective date of this act.

22 SECTION 12. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified
23 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 1-4-121 of Title 27A, unless
24 there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

1 This act shall not limit, waive or abrogate the scope or nature
2 of any statutory or common law privilege, including the work product
3 doctrine and the attorney-client privilege.

4 SECTION 13. This act shall become effective November 1, 2019.

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6 COMMITTEE REPORT BY: COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES,
7 dated 04/09/2019 - DO PASS.
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