

ST 18-0006-GIL 03/27/2018 CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTORS

When a construction contractor permanently affixes tangible personal property to real property, the contractor is deemed the end user of that tangible personal property. As the end user, the contractor incurs Use Tax on the cost price of that tangible personal property. See 86 Ill. Adm. Code 130.2075. (This is a GIL.)

March 27, 2018

Dear Xxxxx:

This letter is in response to your letter dated November 8, 2017, in which you requested information. The Department issues two types of letter rulings. Private Letter Rulings (“PLRs”) are issued by the Department in response to specific taxpayer inquiries concerning the application of a tax statute or rule to a particular fact situation. A PLR is binding on the Department, but only as to the taxpayer who is the subject of the request for ruling and only to the extent the facts recited in the PLR are correct and complete. Persons seeking PLRs must comply with the procedures for PLRs found in the Department’s regulations at 2 Ill. Adm. Code 1200.110. The purpose of a General Information Letter (“GIL”) is to direct taxpayers to Department regulations or other sources of information regarding the topic about which they have inquired. A GIL is not a statement of Department policy and is not binding on the Department. See 2 Ill. Adm. Code 1200.120. You may access our website at www.tax.illinois.gov to review regulations, letter rulings and other types of information relevant to your inquiry.

The nature of your inquiry and the information you have provided require that we respond with a GIL. In your letter you have stated and made inquiry as follows:

We are a STATE entity and I am writing to formally request direction on the IL tax policy for labor services rendered. We may soon be doing work in IL that we want to make sure we are billing our customer correctly. Based on the IL tax policy, are the following taxable or nontaxable for sales tax?

1. We will be removing the old car wash equipment and installing the new equipment. We will not be selling this equipment, it will be purchased by the customer and delivered to the work site where we have been hired by the manufacturer to provide installation. We will charge for labor services only.
2. We will be paid to maintain the equipment for 1 year. The cost of labor for this is currently unknown as of yet.

3. We will provide minor electrical and plumbing services related to the car wash installation. We will provide labor, material and installation for this.

Also, we may be selling products and parts and delivering these items to the IL customer. Will we need to charge IL sales tax on these items and remit this sales tax to IL?

If you could send me any ruling regarding the above questions. Thank you in advance for your assistance on this inquiry and look forward to hearing from you on your decision.

DEPARTMENT'S RESPONSE:

Sales and Occupation Taxes

You indicate in your letter that the Company has been hired by a manufacturer to install car wash equipment and will only charge for the installation of the equipment.

The Illinois Retailers' Occupation Tax Act imposes a tax upon persons engaged in this State in the business of selling tangible personal property to purchasers for use or consumption. See 86 Ill. Adm. Code 130.101. In Illinois, Use Tax is imposed on the privilege of using, in this State, any kind of tangible personal property that is purchased anywhere at retail from a retailer. See 86 Ill. Adm. Code 150.101. These taxes comprise what is commonly known as "sales" tax in Illinois. If the purchases occur in Illinois, the purchasers must pay the Use Tax to the retailer at the time of purchase. The retailers are then allowed to reduce the amount of Use Tax they must remit by the amount of Retailers' Occupation Tax liability which they are required to and do pay to the Department with respect to the same sales. See 86 Ill. Adm. Code 150.130.

Illinois Retailers' Occupation and Use Taxes do not apply to sales of service that do not involve the transfer of tangible personal property to customers. However, if tangible personal property is transferred incident to sales of service, this will result in either Service Occupation Tax liability or Use Tax liability for the businesses providing services (e.g., servicemen) depending upon their activities. For your general information, see of 86 Ill. Adm. Code 140.101 through 140.109 regarding sales of service and Service Occupation Tax.

If a company only performs services and does not transfer any tangible personal property, no tax liability will arise from performing the services.

Maintenance Contracts

In your letter you state that the Company will be hired to maintain the car wash equipment for one year.

The taxability of a maintenance or service agreement depends upon whether the charge for the agreement is included in the selling price of tangible personal property. If the charge for the agreement is included in the selling price of tangible personal property, the charge is part of the gross

receipts of the retail transaction and is subject to tax. No tax is incurred on the maintenance services or parts when the repair or servicing is performed.

If a maintenance agreement is sold separately from tangible personal property, the sale of the agreement is not a taxable transaction. However, when maintenance services or parts are provided under the terms of the maintenance agreement, the seller of the maintenance agreement will be acting as a service provider under provisions of the Service Occupation Tax Act. The Service Occupation Tax provides that when a service provider enters into an agreement to provide maintenance services for particular pieces of equipment for a stated period of time at predetermined fees, the service provider incurs Use Tax based on its cost price of tangible personal property transferred to the customer incident to the completion of the maintenance service. See 86 Ill. Adm. Code 140.301(b)(3). Further, the purchaser of the separate agreement is not charged tax on the labor or tangible personal property that is transferred incident to the completion of the maintenance agreement. If a deductible is charged to the purchaser under the terms of the separate agreement, the deductible is also not subject to tax.

Construction Contracts

In your letter you state that the Company will provide electrical and plumbing services and will provide labor, material and installation.

A contract that provides for both the sale and installation of tangible personal property that is permanently affixed or incorporated into a structure is considered a construction contract. The tax liabilities regarding construction contractors in Illinois may be found at 86 Ill. Adm. Code 130.1940 and 130.2075 on the Department's website. The term construction contractor includes general contractors, subcontractors, and specialized contractors such as landscape contractors. In Illinois, construction contractors are deemed end users of tangible personal property purchased for incorporation into real property. As end users of such tangible personal property, these contractors incur Use Tax liability for such purchases based upon their cost price of the tangible personal property. See 86 Ill. Adm. Code 130.1940 and 86 Ill. Adm. Code 130.2075.

Therefore, any tangible personal property that a construction contractor purchases that will be permanently affixed to or incorporated into real property in this State will be subject to Use Tax. If such contractors did not pay the Use Tax liability to their suppliers, those contractors must register and self-assess their Use Tax liability and pay it directly to the Department. If the contractors have already paid a tax in another state regarding the purchase or use of such property, they will be entitled to a credit against their Illinois Use Tax liability to the extent that they have paid tax that was properly due to another state. See 86 Ill. Adm. Code 150.310.

It is important to note that since construction contractors are the end users of the materials that they permanently affix to real estate, their customers incur no Use Tax liability and the construction contractors have no legal authority to collect the Use Tax from their customers. However, many construction contractors pass on the amount of their Use Tax liabilities to customers in the form of higher prices or by including provisions in their contracts that require customers to "reimburse" the construction contractor for his or her tax liability. Please note that this reimbursement cannot be billed to a customer as "sales tax," but can be listed on a bill as a reimbursement of tax. The choice of whether a construction contractor requires a tax reimbursement from the customer or merely raises his or her price is a business decision on the construction contractor's part.

Section 130.1940(c) addresses situations where tangible personal property is permanently affixed or incorporated into a structure incident to a construction contract. As previously noted, a construction contractor does not incur Retailers' Occupation Tax liability as to receipts from labor furnished and tangible personal property (materials and fixtures) incorporated into a structure as an integral part thereof for an owner when furnished and installed as an incident of a construction contract. A construction contract that provides for both the sale and installation of tangible personal property that is permanently affixed or incorporated into a structure may separately state the cost of installation and the cost of the tangible personal property and remain a construction contract for sales tax purposes. The fact that the installation costs and the tangible personal property costs are separately stated in the contract or on the billing does not change the tax consequences of the transaction.

Nexus

You also mention in your letter that the company may be selling products and parts to the Illinois customer and delivering those parts to the customer. For purposes of discussion, I assume these parts are sold without installation by the Company.

An "Illinois Retailer" is one who makes sales of tangible personal property in Illinois. The Illinois Retailer is then liable for Retailers' Occupation Tax on gross receipts from sales and must collect the corresponding Use Tax incurred by the purchasers. Our regulations were amended in response to the Illinois Supreme Court's decision in *Hartney Fuel Oil Co. v. Hamer*, 2013 IL 115130. The regulations specify the selling activities that trigger Retailers' Occupation Tax liability in Illinois. See 86 Ill. Adm. Code 270.115.

Another type of retailer is the retailer maintaining a place of business in Illinois. The definition of a "retailer maintaining a place of business in Illinois" is described in 86 Ill. Adm. Code 150.201(i). This type of retailer is required to register with the State as an Illinois Use Tax collector. See 86 Ill. Adm. Code 150.801. The retailer must collect and remit Use Tax to the State on behalf of the retailer's Illinois customers even though the retailer does not incur any Retailers' Occupation Tax liability.

The United States Supreme Court in *Quill Corp. v. North Dakota*, 112 S.Ct. 1904 (1992), set forth the current guidelines for determining what nexus requirements must be met before a person is properly subject to a state's tax laws. The Supreme Court has set out a 2-prong test for nexus. The first prong is whether the Due Process Clause is satisfied. Due process will be satisfied if the person or entity purposely avails itself or himself of the benefits of an economic market in a forum state. *Quill* at 1910. The second prong of the Supreme Court's nexus test requires that, if due process requirements have been satisfied, the person or entity must have physical presence in the forum state to satisfy the Commerce Clause. A physical presence is not limited to an office or other physical building. Under Illinois law, it also includes the presence of any agent or representative of the seller. The representative need not be a sales representative. Any type of physical presence in the State of Illinois, including the vendor's delivery and installation of his product on a repetitive basis, will trigger Use Tax collection responsibilities. Please refer to *Brown's Furniture, Inc. v. Zehnder*, 171 Ill.2d 410 (1996).

The final type of retailer is the out-of-State retailer that does not have sufficient nexus with Illinois to be required to submit to Illinois tax laws. A retailer in this situation does not incur Retailers' Occupation Tax on sales into Illinois and is not required to collect Use Tax on behalf of its Illinois customers. However, the retailer's Illinois customers will still incur Use Tax liability on the purchase of the goods and have a duty to self-assess and remit their Use Tax liability directly to the State.

Beginning July 1, 2011, the definition of a "retailer maintaining a place of business" was amended to include additional types of retailers. A retailer maintaining a place of business also includes a retailer having a contract with a person located in this State under which:

- A. The retailer sells the same or substantially similar line of products as the person located in this State and does so using an identical or substantially similar name, trade name, or trademark as the person located in this State; and
- B. The retailer provides a commission or other consideration to the person located in this State based upon the sale of tangible personal property by the retailer. See 35 ILCS 105/2(1.2).

These provisions only apply if the cumulative gross receipts from sales of tangible personal property by the retailer to customers in this State under all such contracts exceed \$10,000 during the preceding 4 quarterly periods. Please note that in *Performance Mktg. Ass'n, Inc. v. Hamer*, 998 N.E.2d 54 (2013) the Illinois Supreme Court struck down 35 ILCS 105/2(1.1) and 35 ILCS 110/2(1.1), a "click-thru nexus provision" enacted in 2011. However, new provisions became effective January 1, 2015. The following provisions address the court's concerns in *Performance Mktg. Ass'n, Inc. v. Hamer*, 998 N.E. 2d 54 (2013).

Beginning January 1, 2015, a retailer maintaining a place of business also includes a retailer having a contract with a person located in this State under which the person, for a commission or other consideration based upon the sale of tangible personal property by the retailer, directly or indirectly refers potential customers to the retailer by providing to the potential customers a promotional code or other mechanism that allows the retailer to track purchases referred by such persons.

Examples of mechanisms that allow the retailer to track purchases referred by such persons include but are not limited to the use of a link on the person's Internet website, promotional codes distributed through the person's hand-delivered or mailed material, and promotional codes distributed by the person through radio or other broadcast media. These provisions apply only if the cumulative gross receipts from sales of tangible personal property by the retailer to customers who are referred to the retailer by all persons in Illinois under such contracts exceed \$10,000 during the preceding 4 quarterly periods ending on the last day of March, June, September, and December. A retailer meeting these requirements shall be presumed to be maintaining a place of business in Illinois but may rebut this presumption by submitting proof that the referrals or other activities pursued within this State by such persons were not sufficient to meet the nexus standards of the United States Constitution during the preceding 4 quarterly periods. See 35 ILCS 105/2(1.1).

I hope this information is helpful. If you require additional information, please visit our website at www.tax.illinois.gov or contact the Department's Taxpayer Information Division at (217) 782-3336.

Very truly yours,

Richard Wolters
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