

A license of canned software is subject to Retailers' Occupation Tax liability if all of the criteria for an exempt license of canned software set out in 86 Ill. Adm. Code 130.1935(a)(1) are not met. See 86 Ill. Adm. Code 130.1935. (This is a GIL.)

September 24, 2008

Dear Xxxxx:

This letter is in response to your letter dated April 29, 2008, in which you request 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:

This is a request for a Private Letter ruling under the provisions of 2 Illinois Administrative Code Section 1200.1 [sic] on behalf of ABC. The Department previously issued a PLR in these identical facts on February 24, 1999. As this PLR will soon expire, we are seeking another PLR for the future. A power of attorney is attached.

FACTS:

1. ABC is a retailer of software located in Illinois.
2. ABC is not presently under audit by the Illinois Department of Revenue. Also, there is no pending litigation with the Department.
3. This request is intended to provide guidance for the collection of tax in future periods.
4. ABC has previously received a private letter ruling from the Department.

AUTHORITY:

ABC believes that the software that it sells under the attached licenses qualifies for exemption from the Retailers' Occupation Tax under the provisions of 6 [sic] Illinois Administrative Code Sec 130.1935 and the attached PLR dated February 24, 1999. The representations in that ruling and the license provisions referenced remain the same.

RULING REQUESTED:

ABC Requests that the Department rule that the licenses are not subject to Illinois Retailer's Occupation Tax and Use Tax.

I have attached copies of the following licenses:

1. TERM LICENSE
2. PERPETUAL LICENSE
2. LRSSPORTS
4. OUTSOURCING CPU LICENSE
5. SCHEDULES

If you have any questions or require further information, please call me.

DEPARTMENT'S RESPONSE:

The Department's regulation "Public Information, Rulemaking and Organization" provides that "[w]hether to issue a private letter ruling in response to a letter ruling request is within the discretion of the Department. The Department will respond to all requests for private letter rulings either by issuance of a ruling or by a letter explaining that the request for ruling will not be honored." 2 Ill. Adm. Code 1200.110(a)(4). Further, the Department's regulations regarding Private Letter Rulings provide that "[i]f there is case law or there are regulations dispositive of the subject to the request, the Department will decline to issue a letter ruling on the subject." 86 Ill. Adm. Code 1200.110(a)(3)(D).

After reviewing the materials you provided in connection with your request, the Department declines to issue a Private Letter Ruling. It is the Department's position that its regulation at 86 Ill. Adm. Code 130.1935 is dispositive of the subject of your request, as are several PLRs and GILs that the Department has issued which can be found on the Department's website. Therefore, we are responding with this General Information Letter that we hope will assist you.

Generally, sales of "canned" computer software are taxable retail sales in Illinois. Sales of canned software are taxable regardless of the means of delivery. For instance, the transfer or sale of canned computer software downloaded electronically would be taxable. However, if the computer software consists of custom computer programs, then the sales of such software may not be taxable retail sales. See 86 Ill. Adm. Code 130.1935(c). Custom computer programs or software must be prepared to the special order of the customer.

Charges for updates of canned software are fully taxable pursuant to Section 130.1935. If the updates qualify as custom software under Section 130.1935(c), they may not be taxable. But, if maintenance agreements provide for updates of canned software, and the charges for those updates are not separately stated and taxed, then the whole agreements would be taxable as sales of canned software.

If transactions for the licensing of computer software meet all of the criteria provided in subsection (a)(1) of Section 130.1935, neither the transfer of the software nor the subsequent software updates will be subject to Retailers' Occupation Tax. A license of software is not a taxable retail sale if:

- A) It is evidenced by a written agreement signed by the licensor and the customer;
- B) It restricts the customer's duplication and use of the software;

- C) It prohibits the customer from licensing, sublicensing or transferring the software to a third party (except to a related party) without the permission and continued control of the licensor;
- D) The licensor has a policy of providing another copy at minimal or no charge if the customer loses or damages the software, or permitting the licensee to make and keep an archival copy, and such policy is either stated in the license agreement, supported by the licensor's books and records, or supported by a notarized statement made under penalties of perjury by the licensor; and
- E) The customer must destroy or return all copies of the software to the licensor at the end of the license period. This provision is deemed to be met, in the case of a perpetual license, without being set forth in the license agreement.

A license of canned software is subject to Retailers' Occupation Tax liability if all of the criteria set out in 86 Ill. Adm. Code 130.1935(a)(1) are not met.

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,

Terry D. Charlton
Senior Counsel, Sales & Excise Taxes

TDC:msk