

July 31, 2025

**OFFICE OF THE HEARING EXAMINER
KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON**
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www.kingcounty.gov/independent/hearing-examiner

REPORT AND DECISION

SUBJECT: King County For-Hire Licensing file no. **63773**

SIRAK BERHE

For-Hire Driver Enforcement Appeal

For Hire no.: 63773

Appellant: **Sirak Berhe**

[REDACTED]
Renton, WA 98058

Telephone: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

King County: King County For-Hire Licensing
represented by **Elizabeth Stenson**
King County For-Hire Licensing
201 S. Jackson Street Suite 206
Seattle, WA 98104
Telephone: (206) 263-2882
Email: elizabeth.stenson@kingcounty.gov

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS:

Overview

1. After hearing the witnesses' testimony and observing their demeanor, studying the exhibits admitted into evidence, and considering the parties' arguments and the relevant law, the Examiner denies the appeal, but reduces the civil penalty.

Background

2. On April 29, 2025, Elizabeth Stenson was on duty as a License Inspector on the 3rd floor of the SeaTac parking garage in the designated TNC pickup area to check compliance with Chapter 6.64 KCC. Ex. D1-001.
3. At approximately 8:56 am, Inspector Stenson contacted the driver of a red Tesla bearing WA plate #CNH9011 with no visible TNC endorsement decal. The driver was identified by FH permit #63773 as Sirak Berhe. When Inspector Stenson questioned Mr. Berhe about the lack of the decal, Mr. Berhe stated that the decal was at home. Exs. D1-001, D2-001; testimony of Ofc. Stenson.
4. On April 30, 2025, Inspector Stenson confirmed through King County records that the decal assigned to Mr. Berhe's vehicle is D1227208 and Mr. Berhe picked it up on September 10, 2024. Exs. D1-001, D3; Stenson testimony.
5. On April 30, 2025, Records and Licensing Services (Licensing) issued Mr. Berhe a Notice and Order of Violation with a \$250 civil penalty. Exs. D1-001, D4; Stenson testimony.
6. Mr. Berhe filed a timely appeal stating that he had not yet applied the decal to his recently-replaced windshield. Exs. D1-001, D5.

Relevant Codes and Rules

7. The Examiner does not grant substantial weight or otherwise accord deference to agency determinations. King County Hearing Examiner Rules of Procedure and Mediation, Rule XV.F.3. For those matters or issues raised in an appeal statement, the agency bears the burden of proving by a preponderance of the evidence both the violation and the appropriateness of the remedy it has imposed. KCC 20.22.080.G; .210.B.
8. KCC 6.64.650 A. mandates that for-hire drivers, before starting each shift, ensure that vehicle safety requirements are met, including ensuring that the transportation network company vehicle endorsement certificate (decal) is in the vehicle.
9. All drivers that are issued a transportation network company vehicle endorsement decal are provided a handout showing proper installation and display of the decal in the vehicle's windshield. Ex. D6; Stenson testimony.
10. Thus, the issues are as follows:

Has Licensing demonstrated by a preponderance of the evidence that:
 - A. At approximately 8:56 AM on April 29, 2025 Appellant operated a for hire vehicle without the TNC endorsement in the vehicle?
 - B. The remedy it imposed (\$250 civil penalty) is appropriate? KCC 20.22.210.

Analysis

11. At the hearing, Mr. Berhe elaborated that his vehicle had been rear-ended by a semi-truck and was in a body shop for several months. He conceded that he did not re-install the decal following the repairs, explaining that, in the stress following loss of work for several months, he forgot to install it. The Examiner finds his testimony credible. Exs. D1-001, D5; testimony of Sirak Berhe.
12. On May 19, 2025 Officer Stenson sent by email settlement offer to Mr. Berhe offering to reduce the civil penalty by one half if the appeal did not proceed to hearing. The offer provided a May 26 deadline for response. Having received no response, on May 28, by email Officer Stenson advised Mr. Berhe that Licensing would proceed to a hearing. Mr. Berhe testified that he not recall seeing either email and that he would have accepted the offer had he been aware of it. He was unable to find either email in his inbox or spam files. Stenson and Berhe testimony.

DECISION:

The appeal is **DENIED** but the penalty is reduced to \$125.00.

ORDERED July 31, 2025.



Alison Moss
Hearing Examiner pro tem

NOTICE OF RIGHT TO APPEAL

King County Code 20.22.040 directs the Examiner to make the County's final decision for this type of case. This decision shall be final and conclusive unless appealed to superior court by *September 1, 2025*. Either party may appeal this decision by applying for a writ of review in superior court in accordance with chapter 7.16 RCW.

**MINUTES OF THE JULY 28, 2025, HEARING IN THE APPEAL OF SIRAK
BERHE, KING COUNTY FOR-HIRE LICENSING FILE NO. 63773**

Alison Moss was the Hearing Examiner in this matter. Participating in the hearing were Elizabeth Stenson and Sirak Berhe. A verbatim recording of the hearing is available in the Hearing Examiner’s Office.

The following exhibits were offered the department and entered into the record:

Exhibit no. 1	King County For-Hire Licensing staff report
Exhibit no. 2	Contact Documentation
Exhibit no. 3	Accela Record of Decal Pickup
Exhibit no. 4	Notice and Order of Violation
Exhibit no. 5	Mr. Berhe’s Appeal
Exhibit no. 6	TNC Endorsement Decal Handout

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

SUBJECT: King County For-Hire Licensing file no. **63773**

SIRAK BERHE

For-Hire Driver Enforcement Appeal

I, Lauren Olson, certify under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of Washington that I transmitted the **REPORT AND DECISION** to those listed on the attached page as follows:

- EMAILED to all County staff listed as parties/interested persons and parties with e-mail addresses on record.
- placed with the United States Postal Service, through Quadient-Impress, with sufficient postage, as FIRST CLASS MAIL in an envelope addressed to the non-County employee parties/interested persons to addresses on record.

DATED July 31, 2025.



Lauren Olson
Legislative Secretary

Bailey, Kendall

Finance and Admin Svcs, Consumer Protection Div

Berhe, Sirak

Hardcopy

Cantu, Eddie

King County For-Hire Licensing

City of Seattle Hearing Examiner

Megow, John

Finance and Admin Svcs, Consumer Protection Div

Newhouse, Cregan

Finance and Admin Svcs, Consumer Protection Div

Stenson, Elizabeth

King County For-Hire Licensing

Taylor, Tyson

King County For-Hire Licensing