



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
**BOARD OF PILOTAGE COMMISSIONERS**

2901 Third Avenue, Suite 500 | Seattle, Washington 98121 | (206) 515-3904 | [www.pilotage.wa.gov](http://www.pilotage.wa.gov)

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)**

Concerning Pilotage in Washington State

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**General**

**Who determines how many pilots to bring in? If it is the pilots by vote, is this a 2/3 majority or a simple majority?**

*The BPC, pursuant to [RCW 88.16.035\(1\)\(d\)](#), determines the number of pilots necessary to be licensed in each district to optimize the operation of a safe, fully regulated, efficient, and competent pilotage service. The BPC considers many factors, which are outlined in [WAC 363-116-065](#), when setting the number of pilots. The number of pilots is not set by the pilots.*

**What other costs come out of pilot fees and what percentage are they? Do you foresee those costs increasing over time?**

*Please review the financial report(s) included in our Annual Reports on for details of pilot fees. Pilot costs vary year to year, so it is impossible to foresee variances. The reports can be found at <https://pilotage.wa.gov/annualreports.html>.*

**Once a trainee is licensed, are they required to live full time in Washington state?**

*There is no Washington state requirement that state-licensed pilots must live in the state.*

**Puget Sound Pilots (PSP)**

**How long before a PSP pilot is vested in the retirement program?**

*Pilots are vested into the PSP retirement program 6 months after they become members.*

**How much is the buy in to the association?**

*The buy-in/buy out amount varies based on a 3-year average of pilot income and is paid over 72 months.*

**Do pilots get to sell their share when they retire?**

*No, PSP members do not own "shares".*

**Does PSP provide medical insurance?**

*Yes, PSP currently provides medical insurance for members of the association.*

**What is the PSP work schedule?**

*Generally speaking, PSP's work schedule is two weeks on and two weeks off. However, technically speaking, pilots are on-duty 15 days and off-duty 13 days when factoring in the overlapping period of time on change day when pilots going off-watch overlap with pilots coming on-watch.*

**Please explain personal days, vacation, and leaves of absences, How long can a leave of absence be and how does that affect medical insurance and retirement vesting?**

*PSP bylaws and operating rules, which can be found the [BPC Annual Report](#), document a rotational 7-day period of earned time off every 5 months. Major medical absences and use of earned callback days for other personal leave is subject to review for approval by PSP Board of Directors. Pilots who are absent from pilotage duties for 60 days or more must request permission from the Board of Pilotage Commissioners.*

**Is there a better place vs. a worse place to live for dispatching?**

*No. Pilots live all around the Puget Sound Pilotage District area.*

**Please describe the dispatching and travel, and how they figure into rest periods.**

*Pilot dispatching includes call time, prep time, travel, and rest intervals as defined in Puget Sound Pilots [Operating Rules](#), Pilotage Act ([Chapter 88.16 RCW](#)), Pilotage Rules ([WAC 363-116](#)) and Board of Pilotage Commissioners' [Policy Statement](#).*

**Please explain what a call back is. Can a pilot on his/her time off refuse to be called back to work? What about being out of the area for your off weeks?**

*Call back work is voluntary. Pilots volunteer to work callbacks during times of peak demand. It is possible to be out of the area, however, please keep in mind that pilots volunteering to work callbacks during times of peak demand still need to comply with PSP operating rules..*

**If working a call back, what is a pilot's daily pay rate vs. their normal 2-week work schedule? How does that effect retirement contributions and sharing in association expenses?**

*When a pilot works a callback day, they earn equivalent time off known as comp days in lieu of extra*

*pay. Comp days may be used for relief during the pilots scheduled on-watch period for sick leave, personal matters, fatigue, and exhaust any remaining balance before retirement.*

**Once the training is completed, are all pilots equal? Are they equal in dispatch, pay, votes, and retirement plans act? Is there any kind of seniority for dispatch purposes or anything else? If there is any multi-tiered system, please describe it.**

*All pilots receive the same compensation and benefits regardless of their license levels.*

**Is there a risk of a competing pilot group forming in Puget Sound? Has there been one in the past?**

*We are unaware of any current risk. A small group formed in the early 1980's called the Port Angeles Pilots. However, they dissolved within a couple of years and rejoined Puget Sound Pilots.*

**How does the long-term manning vs. projected traffic look?**

*We currently are experiencing a level of shipping traffic and surges that cannot be fully covered by the on-duty pilot roster. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, vessel schedules and forecasts have been and continue to be unpredictable.*

**How many days is a pilot required to work per year and can they plan their time off to spend with family in advance?**

*Puget Sound Pilots generally work 181 days per year based on a traditional mariner day-for-day schedule. The pilot dispatch rotation schedule allows pilots to plan, however, their volunteer participation in call back work is another factor of consideration and potential disruption to plans.*

**What is the pilot retirement forecast for the next decade?**

*As outlined in [RCW 88.16.090\(2\)\(ii\)](#), mandatory retirement is at age 70. There will continue to be retirements and opportunities for replacement pilots in Puget Sound throughout the decade.*

**How does PSP's schedule compare to other West Coast pilot groups?**

*The Board of Pilotage Commissioners does not have the schedules for other West Coast Pilot groups to make that comparison. In general, comparisons are difficult due to the geographic differences. Puget Sound Pilots follow a traditional mariner day-for-day schedule.*

**What does the term "three nights and out" refer to?**

*After three consecutive night assignments, Puget Sound pilots shall have a mandatory rest period of at least 12 hours, including at least one period between 2000 and 0800. This mitigates circadian misalignment associated with pilots having too many consecutive night assignments.*

**How is the 2 weeks on 2 weeks off pilot schedule maintained? If it requires more pilots, what actions are being taken to increase the amount of pilot trainees?**

*The number of trainees in the program reflect the likelihood of available training trips. COVID has placed limitations on those numbers. The Training Evaluation Committee (TEC) continuously reviews trip*

*availability and matches the number of trainees to that availability.*

**Regarding work schedule as a pilot, is it the intention for the schedule of pilots to remain equal time on and equal time off in the future?**

*At present there is no discussion of changing the current structure of the pilots' schedule.*

**As the ships continue to grow, are the Puget Sound ship assist tugs meeting/exceeding that growth?**

*The number of assist tugs is controlled by market, not by the BPC.*

**Do you foresee the total number of pilots growing or is the BPC comfortable with the current size of the group?**

*Currently, there are 56 authorized pilot licenses in Puget Sound, but only 50 licensed pilots. Increasing the number of authorized licenses will not be considered until the current number of available slots are full. At the current training rate this could take several years.*

**Does PSP have a buy-in similar to other pilot groups?**

*PSP does have a buy-in. However, the buy-in is done over a 6-year (72 months) period while pilots are working towards an unlimited license, not all at once.*

**Will there be a move to align WA's assignment lengths with other west coast jurisdictions?**

*The unique geography of Puget Sound and the port locations within the districts are the primary factors contributing to assignment lengths.*

**How do PS pilots handle the long stretch at sea speed from West Point to the station? This combined with the size of the district, creates long travel time. How often are pilots resting at home during their assignment? Are they often left alone with only the mate and helmsman with the master below? Does this stretch add to a level of boredom later in a pilot's career?**

*The transit length requires continual situational awareness on the part of pilots. The BPC has not had indications of pilot boredom on their routes. Pilots are personally responsible for obtaining adequate rest while at home.*

### **Port of Grays Harbor (PGH)**

**How does the PGHs' pilot schedules compare to other West Coast Pilot Groups?**

*The Port of Grays Harbor has typically operated with two licensed Pilots. Pilots who work in the Grays Harbor Pilotage District work one month on, one month off, which is not the standard schedule for most pilot groups. A schedule for three licensed Pilots has not been determined at this time.*

**Regarding work schedule as a pilot, is it the intention for the schedule of pilots to remain equal time on and equal time off in the future?**

Yes.

**Once the training is completed, are all pilots equal? Are they equal in dispatch, pay, votes, and retirement plans act? Is there any kind of seniority for dispatch purposes or anything else? If there is any multi-tiered system, please describe it.**

*Grays Harbor pilots are employees of the Port of Grays Harbor and the Port determines their pay which has been the same for each pilot. Port employees become members of the Washington State Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS) from their date of employment. It takes five years for pilots to have unlimited licenses, but based on the current ship tonnage, pilots are able to pilot most ships entering Grays Harbor within two years. Pilots are self-dispatched and talk directly to ships' agents.*

**As the ships continue to grow, are the Grays Harbor ship assist tugs meeting/exceeding that growth?**

*The Port of Grays Harbor has an exclusive agreement with Brusco Tug & Barge to provide safe and adequate ship assist.*

**How does the long-term manning vs. projected traffic look?**

*The Port of Grays Harbor has averaged 92 vessel arrivals per year over the last ten years. Over that same period, these arrivals have translated to an average of 230 shifts or 115 shifts per pilot per year. The Port's goal is to maintain pilot staffing at that level long term.*

**Do you foresee the total number of pilots growing or is the BPC comfortable with the current size of the group?**

*Currently, there are 3 authorized pilot licenses in Grays Harbor. As of today, there are 2 licensed pilots, and 1 trainee. One pilot intends to retire in 2021.*

**What is the pilot retirement forecast for the next decade?**

*As outlined in [RCW 88.16.090\(2\)\(ii\)](#), mandatory retirement is at age 70. There is one mandatory retirement occurring at the PGH within the next decade.*

**Does PGH provide medical insurance?**

*PGH pilots are employees of the Port of Grays Harbor and receive a benefit package including medical insurance.*

**How long before a PGH pilot is vested in the retirement program?**

*Port employees become members of the Washington State Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS) from their date of employment. PERS provides a defined benefit retirement plan upon retirement. The retirement program vests after 5 years.*

**Please explain personal days, vacation, and leaves of absences. How long can a leave of absence be and how does that affect medical insurance and retirement vesting?**

*This question is best answered by the Port of Grays Harbor, whom would love to meet with any/all potential Grays Harbor aspirants personally to help them really understand the intricacies of a smaller port and state benefits. Vacation and sick leave are granted with pay to full-time and part-time regular employees in accordance with Port Policy. Leaves of absence and the terms within are negotiated individually.*