

Persons who sell signs may incur a Retailers' Occupation Tax, Service Occupation Tax or Use Tax liability, depending upon the circumstances of the particular sale. See 86 Ill. Adm. Code 130.2155 (Tax Liability of Sign Vendors); 86 Ill. Adm. Code 140.101 (Basis and Rate of the Service Occupation Tax); 86 Ill. Adm. Code 130.1940 (Construction Contractors and Real Estate Developers) and 86 Ill. Adm. Code 130.2075 (Sales To Construction Contractors, Real Estate Developers and Speculative Builders). (This is a GIL.)

July 8, 2019

Dear Xxxx:

This letter is in response to your letter dated May 10, 2019, 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](http://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:

Could you please forward me a Private Letter Rulings on whether the PRODUCT would be considered Real Property or Tangible Personal Property and clarification of how taxes are to be applied?

There is a manual (see attached) and helpful link to a short video demonstration that shows these elements being installed at LINK that may help with the understanding of what PRODUCT are whether they should be considered **Real Property** or **Tangible Personal Property**.

COMPANY is purchasing these PRODUCT elements as finished goods from the manufacturer and hiring a third party to install them for us. We are then invoicing the dealers directly or the general Contractors for the Supply, Install and Freight Time and Material.

Issues:

1. Whether PRODUCT should retain its character as "**tangible personal property**" or should be [sic] constitute "**real property**" for Illinois Sales & Use Tax purposes.

2. What are the Illinois State and Local sales & use tax consequences of the sale, installation and repair of the PRODUCT that qualifies as **tangible personal property** to COMPANY and its customer?
3. What are the Illinois State and Local sales & use tax consequences of the sale, installation and repair of PRODUCT that qualifies as **real estate** to COMPANY and its customer?

**DEPARTMENT'S RESPONSE:**

The Retailers' Occupation Tax Act imposes a tax upon persons engaged in this State in the business of selling tangible personal property at retail to purchasers for use or consumption. See 86 Ill. Adm. Code 130.101. 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.

A person who sells signs that have commercial value (*i.e.*, value to persons other than the purchasers) incurs Retailers' Occupation Tax (sales tax) liability when making such sales, even if such signs are produced on special order for the purchaser. Examples of signs having such commercial value would be ones that spell out "real estate," "insurance," or "hamburgers," and which do not spell out the name of the purchaser nor the brand name of the purchaser's product and which are not otherwise similarly individualized. See 86 Ill. Adm. Code 130.2155 regarding vendors of signs. When a sign that has commercial value is sold and installed, the installation charge is also subject to Retailers' Occupation Tax unless there is a separate agreement for the installation charge. See 86 Ill. Adm. Code 130.450.

If the sign vendor produces a sign on special order of the customer and the sign is so specialized that it would have no commercial value to anyone other than the customer who placed the order, the sign vendor would not incur Retailers' Occupation Tax liability. These transactions would be subject to liability under the Service Occupation Tax Act, and the sign vendor would be considered a serviceman. See generally, 86 Ill. Adm. Code 140.101.

The above assumes that the signs remain tangible personal property after installation. If the signs were permanently affixed structurally as real estate, then there would be different tax consequences. Under Illinois law, a person who takes tangible personal property off the market and converts it into real estate is deemed a construction contractor and is the legal end-user of the tangible personal property. The construction contractor, as the user, incurs Illinois Use Tax when the tangible personal property that will be converted into real estate is purchased from registered Illinois suppliers. If such items were purchased from suppliers that did not collect the tax, the person who converts the tangible personal property into real estate is required to self-assess and remit the Use Tax to the Department based upon the cost price of the property. For information on construction contractors, see 86 Ill. Adm. Code 130.1940 and 130.2075.

I hope this information is helpful. If you have further questions related to the Illinois sales tax laws, please visit our website at [www.tax.illinois.gov](http://www.tax.illinois.gov) or contact the Department's Taxpayer Information Division at (217) 782-3336.

Very truly yours,

Richard S. Wolters  
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