

Chapter 55

Small Claims

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CROSS REFERENCES

55.050
Fees in small claims department in counties having over 300,000 population, 51.640

55.120
Deposit in lieu of bail or bond, Ch. 22

55.010 Small claims department; jurisdiction. In every justice of the peace district there shall be created and organized by the justice of the peace thereof a department to be known as the Small Claims Department of the Justice Court which shall have jurisdiction, but not exclusive, in cases for the recovery of money or damages only where the amount claimed does not exceed \$35, and where the defendant resides within the district of the justice court.

55.020 Commencement of action. Actions in the small claims departments shall be deemed commenced by the plaintiff appearing in person or by agent or assignee before the justice of the peace and subscribing to, verifying and filing a claim, as provided in this chapter.

55.030 Contents of claim. The claim shall contain the name of the plaintiff and the name of the defendant, followed by a statement, in brief and concise form, of the nature and amount of the claim and the time of its accrual and, if known to the plaintiff, the residence of the defendant, for the purpose of serving him with the notice of the claim.

55.040 Verification and prosecution of claim. All claims shall be verified by the real party in interest, his agent or assignee. Any claim may be filed and prosecuted in the small claims department by such agent or the assignee of the cause of action upon which recovery is sought.

55.050 Time for hearing; issuance of notice of claim; fee. Upon filing of the claim, the justice of the peace shall appoint a time for the hearing of the matter and shall issue a notice of the claim, as provided in this chapter, which shall be served upon the defendant. The justice of the peace shall collect in advance on each claim the sum of \$1, and this shall be the only fee for the justice of the peace to be charged or taxed against the plaintiff in the action during the pendency or disposition of the claim.

55.060 Notice of claim; form and contents. The notice of claim shall be directed to the defendant, naming him, and shall contain a statement in brief and concise form notifying the defendant of the plaintiff's name and address, and the amount and nature of the alleged claim, and requiring the defendant to appear personally in court before the justice of the peace at a time cer-

tain, which shall not be less than five nor more than 10 days from the date of service of the notice. The notice shall further provide that in case of failure to so appear, judgment will be given against the defendant for the amount of the claim.

55.070 Service of notice of claim by officer or by registered mail; fees. The notice of claim shall be served by the officers provided for in ORS 52.120 or by registered mail at the option of the justice of the peace in whose court the claim is filed.

(1) If served by an officer, the notice shall be served in the manner provided for in ORS 52.140, but no other paper is to be served with the notice. Except as may otherwise be provided in ORS 51.640, the officer serving the notice shall be entitled to receive from the plaintiff 50 cents for such service, which sum, together with the fee of the justice of the peace named in ORS 55.050, shall be added to any judgment given for plaintiff.

(2) If served by registered mail, the notice shall be placed in an envelope by the justice of the peace. The envelope shall be, by the justice of the peace, sealed and plainly addressed to the defendant at his last-known mail address within the jurisdiction of the justice court, and delivered to the postal authorities for transmittal to the defendant by registered mail. The envelope with the contents thereof shall be registered by the postal authorities at the place of mailing. The envelope shall have plainly marked thereon the words "Deliver to Addressee Only" and the words "Return Receipt Requested." The date of delivery appearing on the return receipt shall be prima facie evidence of the date the notice of claim was served on the defendant. The justice of the peace shall demand and receive from the plaintiff such sum, not exceeding 35 cents, as shall be required to pay all postal and registration fees, and this sum shall be added to any judgment given for plaintiff.

55.080 Formal pleadings and proceedings unnecessary; issuance of attachment, garnishment or execution. No formal pleading, other than the claim and notice, shall be necessary to define the issue between the parties. The hearing and disposition of all actions shall be informal, the sole object being to dispense justice between the litigants promptly. No attachment, garnishment or execution shall issue from the small

claims department on any claim except as provided in this chapter.

awarded against him on the _____ day of _____, 19__.

_____, Appellant.

55.090 Right of attorneys or persons not a party to appear; witnesses; disposition of controversy. Except as may otherwise be provided by ORS 55.040, no attorney at law nor any person other than the plaintiff and defendant shall concern himself or in any manner interfere with the prosecution or defense of the litigation in the department without the consent of the justice of the justice's court, nor shall it be necessary to summon witnesses. But the plaintiff and defendant may offer evidence in their behalf by witnesses appearing at the hearing, and the justice may informally consult witnesses or otherwise investigate the controversy and give judgment or make such orders as he deems right, just and equitable for the disposition of the controversy.

(2) All appeals shall be filed with the justice and accompanied by a bond, with satisfactory surety, to secure the payment of the judgment, costs and attorney's fees, as provided in ORS 55.110. The appeal shall be tried in the circuit court without any other pleadings than those required in the justice's court originally trying the cause. All papers in the cause shall be certified to the circuit court as is provided by law in other cases of appeals in civil actions in justice's courts. The circuit court may require any other or further statements or information it may deem necessary for a proper consideration of the controversy. The appeal shall be tried in the circuit court without the intervention of a jury. There shall be no appeal from any judgment of the circuit court rendered upon the appeal, but such judgment shall be final and conclusive.

55.100 Payment of judgment against defendant. If the judgment or order is against the defendant, he shall pay the same forthwith upon the terms and conditions prescribed by the justice.

55.130 Enforcement of judgment when no appeal is taken; fees. (1) If no appeal is taken by the defendant and he fails to pay the judgment according to the terms and conditions thereof, the justice before whom the hearing was had, may, on application of the plaintiff, certify the judgment in substantially the following form:

In the Justice Court for _____ District,
_____ County, Oregon.

Plaintiff,
vs.

Defendant.

In the Small Claims Department

This is to certify that in a certain action before me, the undersigned, had on this, the _____ day of _____, 19__, wherein _____ was plaintiff and _____ was defendant, jurisdiction of the defendant having been had by personal service (or otherwise), as provided by law, I then and there entered judgment against the defendant in the sum of _____ dollars, which judgment has not been paid.

Witness my hand this _____ day of _____, 19__.

Justice of Peace Sitting in
the Small Claims Department.

(2) Upon payment of a fee of \$1 the

55.110 Conclusiveness of judgment upon the plaintiff; appeal by defendant; costs and fees on appeal. The judgment of the court shall be conclusive upon the plaintiff. If the defendant is dissatisfied, he may, within 10 days from the entry of the judgment against him, appeal to the circuit court of the county in which the justice's court is located. If final judgment is rendered against the defendant in the circuit court, he shall pay, in addition to the judgment, an attorney's fee to the plaintiff in the sum of \$10. Appeals from the small claims department shall only be allowed in cases in which appeals would be allowed if the action were instituted and the judgment rendered in the justices' courts, as is provided by law.

55.120 Form of appeal; bond; proceedings in circuit court; no further appeal. (1) The defendant's appeal may be in the following form:

In the _____ Court for _____ District,
_____ County, Oregon. _____, Plaintiff,
vs. _____, Defendant. Comes now _____, a resident of _____ County, Oregon, and appeals from the decision of the small claims department of the justice's court for _____ District, _____ County, Oregon, wherein a judgment for _____ dollars was

justice of the peace shall forthwith enter the judgment transcript on the docket of the justice court. Thereafter execution and other process on execution provided by law may issue thereon as in other cases of judgments of justices' courts, and transcripts of the judgments may be filed and entered in judgment dockets in circuit courts with like effect as in other cases.

55.140 Separate docket for small claims department. Each justice of the peace shall keep a separate docket for the small claims department of his court, in which he shall make a permanent record of all proceedings, orders and judgments had and made in the small claims department.

