
Kinds of cases that were sealed

The King County Superior Court assigns each civil suit a case type, using broad categories. These 420 cases, sealed between 1990 and 2005, fell into the following case types:

- 97** — **Tort/personal injury/wrongful death:** We combined these categories because they frequently overlap. A tort is a civil wrong or injury. Generally in these cases, someone got hurt, and someone is being blamed.
- 78** — **Domestic violence:** You might be tempted to write these off as private matters. But the people accused of violence in these cases include police officers and others in positions of public trust.
- 54** — **Miscellaneous:** A catch-all category used by the court. One of these lawsuits involves a pedophile priest. Others involve alleged wrongdoing by lawyers, doctors and businesses.
- 43** — **Commercial:** Business disputes, mostly. These cases can reveal financial misconduct by publicly traded companies or alleged wrongdoing by law firms or other businesses.
- 27** — **Unlawful harassment:** Harassment includes words or actions that annoy or alarm, causing fear or emotional distress.
- 24** — **Medical malpractice:** These cases typically allege negligence by doctors, dentists or other health-care professionals.
- 21** — **Injunction:** Someone sues to prevent someone else from doing something wrong.
- 15** — **Change of name:** Authorities in Seattle recently accused a con man of covering his tracks by changing his name and getting the file sealed.
- 13** — **Other malpractice:** These mostly involve alleged malpractice by lawyers.
- 48** — **All other categories combined:** These run the gamut, with lawsuits involving everything from unpaid debts to damage to property to threats to the safety of children or vulnerable adults.

Source: Seattle Times analysis of King County court records

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