

RCW 48.37.060 Market conduct examinations—Procedures—Final orders—Fees. (1) When the commissioner determines that other market conduct actions identified in RCW 48.37.040(4)(a) have not sufficiently addressed issues raised concerning company activities in Washington state, the commissioner has the discretion to conduct market conduct examinations in accordance with the NAIC market conduct uniform examination procedures and the NAIC market regulation handbook.

(2)(a) In lieu of an examination of an insurer licensed in this state, the commissioner shall accept an examination report of another state, unless the commissioner determines that the other state does not have laws substantially similar to those of this state, or does not have a market oversight system that is comparable to the market conduct oversight system set forth in this law.

(b) The commissioner's determination under (a) of this subsection is discretionary with the commissioner and is not subject to appeal.

(c) If the insurer to be examined is part of an insurance holding company system, the commissioner may also seek to simultaneously examine any affiliates of the insurer under common control and management which are licensed to write the same lines of business in this state.

(3) Before commencement of a market conduct examination, market conduct oversight personnel shall prepare a work plan consisting of the following:

- (a) The name and address of the insurer being examined;
- (b) The name and contact information of the examiner-in-charge;
- (c) The name of all market conduct oversight personnel initially assigned to the market conduct examination;
- (d) The justification for the examination;
- (e) The scope of the examination;
- (f) The date the examination is scheduled to begin;
- (g) Notice of any noninsurance department personnel who will assist in the examination;
- (h) A time estimate for the examination;
- (i) A budget for the examination if the cost of the examination is billed to the insurer; and
- (j) An identification of factors that will be included in the billing if the cost of the examination is billed to the insurer.

(4)(a) Within ten days of the receipt of the information contained in subsection (3) of this section, insurers may request the commissioner's discretionary review of any alleged conflict of interest, pursuant to RCW 48.37.090(2), of market conduct oversight personnel and noninsurance department personnel assigned to a market conduct examination. The request for review shall specifically describe the alleged conflict of interest in the proposed assignment of any person to the examination.

(b) Within five business days of receiving a request for discretionary review of any alleged conflict of interest in the proposed assignment of any person to a market conduct examination, the commissioner or designee shall notify the insurer of any action regarding the assignment of personnel to a market conduct examination based on the insurer's allegation of conflict of interest.

(5) Market conduct examinations shall, to the extent feasible, use desk examinations and data requests before an on-site examination.

(6) Market conduct examinations shall be conducted in accordance with the provisions set forth in the NAIC market regulation handbook

and the NAIC market conduct uniform examinations procedures, subject to the precedence of the provisions of chapter 82, Laws of 2007.

(7) The commissioner shall use the NAIC standard data request.

(8) Announcement of the examination shall be sent to the insurer and posted on the NAIC's examination tracking system as soon as possible but in no case later than sixty days before the estimated commencement of the examination, except where the examination is conducted in response to extraordinary circumstances as described in RCW 48.37.050(2)(a). The announcement sent to the insurer shall contain the examination work plan and a request for the insurer to name its examination coordinator.

(9) If an examination is expanded significantly beyond the original reasons provided to the insurer in the notice of the examination required by subsection (3) of this section, the commissioner shall provide written notice to the insurer, explaining the expansion and reasons for the expansion. The commissioner shall provide a revised work plan if the expansion results in significant changes to the items presented in the original work plan required by subsection (3) of this section.

(10) The commissioner shall conduct a preexamination conference with the insurer examination coordinator and key personnel to clarify expectations at least thirty days before commencement of the examination, unless otherwise agreed by the insurer and the commissioner.

(11) Before the conclusion of the field work for market conduct examination, the examiner-in-charge shall review examination findings to date with insurer personnel and schedule an exit conference with the insurer, in accordance with procedures in the NAIC market regulation handbook.

(12)(a) No later than sixty days after completion of each market conduct examination, the commissioner shall make a full written report of each market conduct examination containing only facts ascertained from the accounts, records, and documents examined and from the sworn testimony of individuals, and such conclusions and recommendations as may reasonably be warranted from such facts.

(b) The report shall be certified by the commissioner or by the examiner-in-charge of the examination, and shall be filed in the commissioner's office subject to (c) of this subsection.

(c) The commissioner shall furnish a copy of the market conduct examination report to the person examined not less than ten days and, unless the time is extended by the commissioner, not more than thirty days prior to the filing of the report for public inspection in the commissioner's office. If the person so requests in writing within such period, the commissioner shall hold a hearing to consider objections of such person to the report as proposed, and shall not so file the report until after such hearing and until after any modifications in the report deemed necessary by the commissioner have been made.

(d) Within thirty days of the end of the period described in (c) of this subsection, unless extended by order of the commissioner, the commissioner shall consider the report, together with any written submissions or rebuttals and any relevant portions of the examiner's work papers and enter an order:

(i) Adopting the market conduct examination report as filed or with modification or corrections. If the market conduct examination report reveals that the company is operating in violation of any law, rule, or order of the commissioner, the commissioner may order the

company to take any action the commissioner considers necessary and appropriate to cure that violation;

(ii) Rejecting the market conduct examination report with directions to the examiners to reopen the examination for purposes of obtaining additional data, documentation, or information, and refileing under this subsection; or

(iii) Calling for an investigatory hearing with no less than twenty days' notice to the company for purposes of obtaining additional documentation, data, information, and testimony.

(e) All orders entered under (d) of this subsection must be accompanied by findings and conclusions resulting from the commissioner's consideration and review of the market conduct examination report, relevant examiner work papers, and any written submissions or rebuttals. The order is considered a final administrative decision and may be appealed under the administrative procedure act, chapter 34.05 RCW, and must be served upon the company by certified mail or certifiable electronic means, together with a copy of the adopted examination report. A copy of the adopted examination report must be sent by certified mail or certifiable electronic means to each director at the director's residential address or to a personal email account.

(f) (i) Upon the adoption of the market conduct examination report under (d) of this subsection, the commissioner shall continue to hold the content of the examination report as private and confidential information for a period of five days except that the order may be disclosed to the person examined. Thereafter, the commissioner may open the report for public inspection so long as no court of competent jurisdiction has stayed its publication.

(ii) If the commissioner determines that regulatory action is appropriate as a result of any market conduct examination, he or she may initiate any proceedings or actions as provided by law.

(iii) Nothing contained in this subsection requires the commissioner to disclose any information or records that would indicate or show the existence or content of any investigation or activity of a criminal justice agency.

(g) The insurer's response shall be included in the commissioner's order adopting the final report as an exhibit to the order. The insurer is not obligated to submit a response.

(13) The commissioner may withhold from public inspection any examination or investigation report for so long as he or she deems it advisable.

(14) (a) Market conduct examinations within this state of any insurer domiciled or having its home offices in this state, other than a title insurer, made by the commissioner or the commissioner's examiners and employees shall, except as to fees, mileage, and expense incurred as to witnesses, be at the expense of the state.

(b) Every other examination, whatsoever, or any part of the market conduct examination of any person domiciled or having its home offices in this state requiring travel and services outside this state, shall be made by the commissioner or by examiners designated by the commissioner and shall be at the expense of the person examined; but a domestic insurer shall not be liable for the compensation of examiners employed by the commissioner for such services outside this state.

(c) When making a market conduct examination under this chapter, the commissioner may contract, in accordance with applicable state contracting procedures, for qualified attorneys, appraisers,

independent certified public accountants, contract actuaries, and other similar individuals who are independently practicing their professions, even though those persons may from time to time be similarly employed or retained by persons subject to examination under this chapter, as examiners as the commissioner deems necessary for the efficient conduct of a particular examination. The compensation and per diem allowances paid to such contract persons shall be reasonable in the market and time incurred, shall not exceed one hundred twenty-five percent of the compensation and per diem allowances for examiners set forth in the guidelines adopted by the national association of insurance commissioners, unless the commissioner demonstrates that one hundred twenty-five percent is inadequate under the circumstances of the examination, and subject to the provisions of (a) of this subsection.

(d) (i) The person examined and liable shall reimburse the state upon presentation of an itemized statement thereof, for the actual travel expenses of the commissioner's examiners, their reasonable living expenses allowance, and their per diem compensation, including salary and the employer's cost of employee benefits, at a reasonable rate approved by the commissioner, incurred on account of the examination. Per diem, salary, and expenses for employees examining insurers domiciled outside the state of Washington shall be established by the commissioner on the basis of the national association of insurance commissioner's recommended salary and expense schedule for zone examiners, or the salary schedule and the expense schedule established by the office of financial management, whichever is higher. A domestic title insurer shall pay the examination expense and costs to the commissioner as itemized and billed by the commissioner.

(ii) The commissioner or the commissioner's examiners shall not receive or accept any additional emolument on account of any examination.

(iii) Market conduct examination fees subject to being reimbursed by an insurer shall be itemized and bills shall be provided to the insurer on a monthly basis for review prior to submission for payment, or as otherwise provided by state law.

(e) Nothing contained in this chapter limits the commissioner's authority to terminate or suspend any examination in order to pursue other legal or regulatory action under the insurance laws of this state. Findings of fact and conclusions made pursuant to any examination are prima facie evidence in any legal or regulatory action.

(f) The commissioner shall maintain active management and oversight of market conduct examination costs, including costs associated with the commissioner's own examiners, and with retaining qualified contract examiners necessary to perform an examination. Any agreement with a contract examiner shall:

(i) Clearly identify the types of functions to be subject to outsourcing;

(ii) Provide specific timelines for completion of the outsourced review;

(iii) Require disclosure to the insurer of contract examiners' recommendations;

(iv) Establish and use a dispute resolution or arbitration mechanism to resolve conflicts with insurers regarding examination fees; and

(v) Require disclosure of the terms of the contracts with the outside consultants that will be used, specifically the fees and/or hourly rates that can be charged.

(g) The commissioner, or the commissioner's designee, shall review and affirmatively endorse detailed billings from the qualified contract examiner before the detailed billings are sent to the insurer. [2015 3rd sp.s. c 1 § 323; 2011 1st sp.s. c 43 § 460; 2008 c 100 § 2; 2007 c 82 § 8.]

Effective date—Purpose—2011 1st sp.s. c 43: See notes following RCW 43.19.003.