

WAC 284-07-150 Qualifications of independent certified public accountant. (1) The commissioner shall not recognize a person or firm as a qualified independent certified public accountant if the person or firm:

(a) Is not in good standing with the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) and in all states in which the accountant is licensed to practice, or, for a Canadian or British company, that is not a chartered accountant; or

(b) Has either directly or indirectly entered into an agreement of indemnity or release from liability (collectively referred to as an indemnification) with respect to the audit of the insurer.

(2) Except as otherwise provided in WAC 284-07-100 through 284-07-230, the commissioner shall recognize an independent certified public accountant as qualified as long as he or she conforms to the standards of his or her profession, as contained in the Code of Professional Ethics of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) and statutes (chapter 18.04 RCW) and rules (chapter 4-25 WAC) of the Washington state board of accountancy, or similar rules.

(3) A qualified independent certified public accountant may enter into any agreement with an insurer to have disputes relating to an audit resolved by mediation or arbitration. However, in the event of a delinquency proceeding commenced against the insurer under chapters 48.31 and 48.99 RCW, the mediation or arbitration provisions shall operate at the option of the statutory successor.

(4) (a) The lead (or coordinating) partner (having primary responsibility for the audit) may not act in that capacity for more than five consecutive years. The person shall be disqualified from acting in that or a similar capacity for the same company or its insurance subsidiaries or affiliates for a period of five consecutive years. An insurer may make application to the commissioner for relief from the above rotation requirement on the basis of unusual circumstances. This application must be made at least thirty days before the end of the calendar year. The commissioner may consider the following factors in determining if the relief should be granted:

(i) Number of partners, expertise of the partners, or the number of insurance clients in the currently registered firm;

(ii) Premium volume of the insurer; and

(iii) Number of jurisdictions in which the insurer transacts business.

(b) The insurer shall file, with its annual statement filing, the approval for relief from WAC 284-07-150 (4)(a) with the states that it is licensed in or doing business in and with the NAIC. If the nondomestic state accepts electronic filing with the NAIC, the insurer shall file the approval in an electronic format acceptable to the NAIC.

(5) The commissioner shall not recognize as a qualified independent certified public accountant, nor accept any annual audited financial report, prepared in whole or in part by, any natural person who:

(a) Has been convicted of fraud, bribery, a violation of the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act, 18 U.S.C. Sections 1961-1968, or any dishonest conduct or practices under federal or state law;

(b) Has been found to have violated the insurance laws of this state with respect to any previous reports submitted under WAC 284-07-100 through 284-07-230; or

(c) Has demonstrated a pattern or practice of failing to detect or disclose material information in previous reports filed under the provisions of WAC 284-07-100 through 284-07-230.

(6) The commissioner as provided in RCW 48.02.060 may hold a hearing to determine whether an independent certified public accountant is qualified and, considering the evidence presented, may rule that the accountant is not qualified for purposes of expressing his or her opinion on the financial statements in the annual audited financial report made pursuant to WAC 284-07-100 through 284-07-230 and require the insurer to replace the accountant with another whose relationship with the insurer is qualified within the meaning of WAC 284-07-100 through 284-07-230.

(7)(a) The commissioner shall not recognize as a qualified independent certified public accountant, nor accept an annual audited financial report, prepared in whole or in part by an accountant who provides to an insurer, contemporaneously with the audit, the following nonaudit services:

(i) Bookkeeping or other services related to the accounting records or financial statements of the insurer;

(ii) Financial information systems design and implementation;

(iii) Appraisal or valuation services, fairness opinions, or contribution-in-kind reports;

(iv) Actuarially oriented advisory services involving the determination of amounts recorded in the financial statements. The accountant may assist an insurer in understanding the methods, assumptions and inputs used in the determination of amounts recorded in the financial statements only if it is reasonable to conclude that the services provided will not be subject to audit procedures during an audit of the insurer's financial statements. An accountant's actuary may also issue an actuarial opinion or certification (opinion) on an insurer's reserves if the following conditions have been met:

(A) Neither the accountant nor the accountant's actuary has performed any management functions or made any management decisions;

(B) The insurer has competent personnel (or engages a third-party actuary) to estimate the reserves for which management takes responsibility; and

(C) The accountant's actuary tests the reasonableness of the reserves after the insurer's management has determined the amount of the reserves;

(v) Internal audit outsourcing services;

(vi) Management functions or human resources;

(vii) Broker or dealer, investment adviser, or investment banking services;

(viii) Legal services or expert services unrelated to the audit; or

(ix) Any other services that the commissioner determines, by rule, are impermissible.

(b) In general, the principles of independence with respect to services provided by the qualified independent certified public accountant are largely predicated on three basic principles, violations of which would impair the accountant's independence. The principles are that the accountant cannot function in the role of management, cannot audit his or her own work, and cannot serve in an advocacy role of the insurer.

(8) Insurers having direct written and assumed premiums of less than one hundred million dollars in any calendar year may request an exemption from subsection (7)(a) of this section. The insurer shall

file with the commissioner a written statement discussing the reasons why the insurer should be exempt from these provisions. If the commissioner finds, upon review of this statement, that compliance with WAC 284-07-100 through 284-07-230 would constitute a financial or organizational hardship upon the insurer, an exemption may be granted.

(9) A qualified independent certified public accountant who performs the audit may engage in other nonaudit services, including tax services, that are not described in subsection (7)(a) of this section or that do not conflict with subsection (7)(b) of this section, only if the activity is approved in advance by the audit committee, in accordance with subsection (10) of this section.

(10) All auditing services and nonaudit services provided to an insurer by the qualified independent certified public accountant of the insurer shall be preapproved by the audit committee. The preapproval requirement is waived with respect to nonaudit services if the insurer is a SOX compliant entity or a direct or indirect wholly owned subsidiary of a SOX compliant entity or:

(a) The aggregate amount of all such nonaudit services provided to the insurer constitutes not more than five percent of the total amount of fees paid by the insurer to its qualified independent certified public accountant during the fiscal year in which the nonaudit services are provided;

(b) The services were not recognized by the insurer at the time of the engagement to be nonaudit services; and

(c) The services are promptly brought to the attention of the audit committee and approved prior to the completion of the audit by the audit committee or by one or more of the members of the audit committee who are the members of the board of directors to whom authority to grant such approvals has been delegated by the audit committee.

(11) The audit committee may delegate to one or more designated members of the audit committee the authority to grant the preapprovals required by subsection (10) of this section. The decisions of any member to whom this authority is delegated shall be presented to the full audit committee at each of its scheduled meetings.

(12)(a) The commissioner shall not recognize an independent certified public accountant as qualified for a particular insurer if a member of the board, president, chief executive officer, controller, chief financial officer, chief accounting officer, or any other person serving in an equivalent position for that insurer, was employed by the independent certified public accountant and participated in the audit of that insurer during the one-year period preceding the date that the most current statutory opinion is due. This section shall only apply to partners and senior managers involved in the audit. An insurer may make application to the commissioner for relief from the above requirement on the basis of unusual circumstances.

(b) The insurer shall file, with its annual statement filing, the approval for relief from (a) of this subsection with the states that it is licensed in or doing business in and the NAIC. If the nondomestic state accepts electronic filing with the NAIC, the insurer shall file the approval in an electronic format acceptable to the NAIC.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 48.02.060, 48.44.050, 48.46.200, 48.05.250, 48.44.095, 48.46.080, 48.46.200, and 48.125.090. WSR 09-20-069 (Matter No. R 2009-09), § 284-07-150, filed 10/5/09, effective 11/5/09. Statutory Authority: RCW 48.02.060, 48.05.250, 48.44.050, 48.44.095, 48.46.080, 48.46.200, and 48.125.090. WSR 09-07-044 (Matter No. R 2008-29), § 284-07-150, filed 3/11/09, effective 4/11/09. Statutory

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