

No. **2021-7071**

Confidential Information Redacted
Texas Labor Code §§402.083 and 402.092

**Official Order
of the
Texas Commissioner of Workers' Compensation**

Date: 11/9/2021

Subject Considered:

Church Mutual Insurance Company, S.I.
3000 Schuster Lane
Merrill, Wisconsin 54452-3863

Consent Order
DWC Enforcement File No. 27072

General remarks and official action taken:

This is a consent order with Church Mutual Insurance Company, S.I. (Church Mutual). The commissioner of the Texas Department of Insurance, Division of Workers' Compensation (DWC) considers whether DWC should take disciplinary action against Church Mutual.

Waiver

Church Mutual acknowledges that the Texas Labor Code and other applicable laws provide certain rights. Church Mutual waives all of these rights, and any other procedural rights that apply, in consideration of the entry of this consent order.

Findings of Fact

1. Church Mutual holds a certificate of authority issued by the Texas Department of Insurance to transact the business of insurance pursuant to TEX. INS. CODE §§ 801.051-801.053 and is licensed to write multiple lines of insurance in Texas, including workers' compensation/employers' liability insurance.
2. Church Mutual was classified as "average" tier in the 2007, 2009, and 2018 Performance Based Oversight (PBO) assessments. Church Mutual was classified as

"high" tier in the 2010 PBO assessment. Church Mutual was not selected to be tiered in the 2012, 2014, or 2016 PBO assessments.

DWC Audit No. IBA-21-103

3. On [REDACTED] DWC initiated DWC Audit No. IBA-21-103 to determine whether Church Mutual complied with the Texas Labor Code and related rules on the timely payment of lifetime income benefits and death benefits (DBs), as well as timely submitting claim data to DWC.
4. The audit examined DB payments that Church Mutual reported issuing between [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] DWC identified four initial DB claims for audit. A total of two initial DB claims failed to meet selection criteria and were dropped from the audit sample. The remaining two claims were reviewed to determine Church Mutual's compliance.
5. The audit focused on the accuracy of Church Mutual's payment of DBs, as well as timely submitting claim data to DWC. The electronic data interchange (EDI) portion of the audit focused on timely reporting DB terminations.

Failure to Timely Pay Accurate DBs

6. Church Mutual failed to timely pay accurate DBs for 50% of examined payments (one out of two).
7. Specifically, Church Mutual issued payments to subsequent injury fund (SIF) beneficiaries over 133 weeks late in one instance.

Assessment of Sanction

1. Failure to provide DBs in a timely and cost-effective manner is harmful to injured employees, their beneficiaries, and the Texas workers' compensation system.
2. In assessing the sanction for this case, DWC fully considered the following factors in TEX. LAB. CODE § 415.021(c) and 28 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 180.26(e):
 - the seriousness of the violation, including the nature, circumstances, consequences, extent, and gravity of the prohibited act;
 - the history and extent of previous administrative violations;

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- the violator's demonstration of good faith, including actions it took to rectify the consequences of the prohibited act;
 - the penalty necessary to deter future violations;
 - whether the administrative violation had a negative impact on the delivery of benefits to an injured employee or their beneficiaries;
 - the history of compliance with EDI requirements;
 - to the extent reasonable, the economic benefit resulting from the prohibited act; and
 - other matters that justice may require, including, but not limited to:
 - PBO assessments;
 - prompt and earnest actions to prevent future violations;
 - self-report of the violation;
 - the size of the company or practice;
 - the effect of a sanction on the availability of health care; and
 - evidence of heightened awareness of the legal duty to comply with the Texas Workers' Compensation Act and DWC rules.
3. DWC found the following factors in TEX. LAB. CODE § 415.021(c) and 28 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 180.26(e) to be aggravating: the seriousness of the violation, including the nature, circumstances, consequences, extent, and gravity of the prohibited act; the history and extent of previous administrative violations; the penalty necessary to deter future violations; whether the administrative violation had a negative impact on the delivery of benefits to an injured employee or their beneficiaries; the history of compliance with EDI requirements; and other matters that justice may require, including the size of the company or practice.
4. DWC found the following factors in TEX. LAB. CODE § 415.021(c) and 28 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 180.26(e) to be mitigating: whether the administrative violation had a negative impact on the delivery of benefits to an injured employee or their beneficiaries, as the payments were paid to the SIF, not an individual beneficiary. In addition, the seriousness of the violation must be considered, including the nature, circumstances, consequences, extent, and gravity of the prohibited act, as the insurance carrier has instituted additional training and a corrective action plan intended to ensure the error does not reoccur.
5. Church Mutual acknowledges it communicated with DWC about the relevant statutes and rules it violated; the facts establish that the administrative violation

occurred; and the proposed sanction is appropriate, including the factors DWC considered under TEX. LAB. CODE § 415.021(c) and 28 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 180.26(e).

6. Church Mutual acknowledges that, in assessing the sanction, DWC considered the factors in TEX. LAB. CODE § 415.021(c) and 28 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 180.26(e).

Conclusions of Law

1. The commissioner has jurisdiction over this matter pursuant to TEX. LAB. CODE §§ 402.001, 402.00114, 402.00116, 402.00128, 409.021, 414.002, 414.003, 415.002, and 415.021.
2. The commissioner has the authority to dispose of this case informally pursuant to TEX. GOV'T CODE § 2001.056, TEX. LAB. CODE §§ 401.021 and 402.00128(b)(6)-(7), and 28 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 180.26(h) and (i).
3. Church Mutual has knowingly and voluntarily waived all procedural rights to which it may have been entitled regarding the entry of this order, including, but not limited to, issuance and service of notice of intent to institute disciplinary action, notice of hearing, a public hearing, a proposal for decision, a rehearing by the commissioner, and judicial review.
4. Pursuant to TEX. LAB. CODE § 415.021, the commissioner may assess an administrative penalty against a person who commits an administrative violation.
5. Pursuant to TEX. LAB. CODE § 415.002(a)(20), an insurance carrier or its representative commits an administrative violation each time it violates a DWC rule.
6. Pursuant to TEX. LAB. CODE § 415.002(a)(22), an insurance carrier or its representative commits an administrative violation each time it fails to comply with a provision of the Texas Workers' Compensation Act.
7. Pursuant to TEX. LAB. CODE §§ 408.081, 409.023, and 415.002(a)(16), an insurance carrier must pay benefits weekly, as and when the benefits accrue, without order from the commissioner.

8. Pursuant to TEX. LAB. CODE § 408.181(a) and (b), an insurance carrier must pay accurate DBs to a legal beneficiary. Under TEX. LAB. CODE § 408.061, the amount of a DB is equal to 75% of the employee's average weekly wage.
9. Pursuant to TEX. LAB. CODE § 409.021 and 28 TEX. ADMIN. CODE §§ 124.3 and 124.7, an insurance carrier is required to initiate payment of DBs no later than the 15th day after it receives written notice of the injury or the seventh day after the accrual date. It must also notify DWC in writing of its initiation of income or DB payments in the manner DWC rules prescribe.
10. Church Mutual violated TEX. LAB. CODE § 415.002(a)(20) and (22) each time it failed to timely pay accurate DBs.

Order

It is ordered that Church Mutual Insurance Company, S.I. must pay an administrative penalty of \$85,000 within 30 days from the date of this order. Church Mutual Insurance Company, S.I. must pay the administrative penalty by company check, cashier's check, or money order and make it payable to the "State of Texas." Mail the administrative penalty to the Texas Department of Insurance, Attn: DWC Enforcement Section, MC AO-9999, P.O. Box 12030, Austin, Texas 78711-2030.



Dan Paschal, J.D.
Deputy Commissioner
Policy & Customer Services
TDI, Division of Workers' Compensation

Approved Form and Content:



Amy Norman
Staff Attorney, Enforcement
Compliance and Investigations
TDI, Division of Workers' Compensation

Unsworn Declaration

STATE OF Wisconsin §
§
COUNTY OF Lincoln §

Pursuant to the TEX. CIV. PRAC. & REM. CODE § 132.001(a), (b), and (d), my name is Rebecca Hudzik-Presson, I hold the position of Vice President - Claims and am the authorized representative of Church Mutual Insurance Company S.I. My business address is:

3000 Schuster Lane , Merrill, Lincoln, WI, 54452.

(Street) (City) (County) (State) (ZIP Code)

I am executing this declaration as part of my assigned duties and responsibilities. I declare under penalty of perjury that the facts stated in this document are true and correct.



Declarant

Executed on September 23, 2021.

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