

No. **2021-6992**

Confidential Information Redacted
Texas Labor Code §§402.083 and 402.092

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

Date: 09/27/2021

Subject Considered:

Hartford Casualty Insurance Company
P.O. Box 26300
Austin, Texas 78755-0300

Consent Order
DWC Enforcement File No. 27174

General remarks and official action taken:

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

Waiver

Hartford Casualty acknowledges that the Texas Labor Code and other applicable laws provide certain rights. Hartford Casualty 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. Hartford Casualty 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.

- Hartford Casualty was classified as "poor" tier in the 2007 Performance Based Oversight (PBO) assessment. Hartford Casualty was classified as "average" tier in the 2009, 2014, and 2016 PBO assessments. Hartford Casualty was classified as "high" tier in the 2010, 2012, and 2018 PBO assessments.

Failure to Timely Initiate Payment of Accrued Temporary Income Benefits

- Hartford Casualty was required to pay temporary income benefits (TIBs) to an injured employee for the period of [REDACTED] through [REDACTED]. The TIBs payment was due seven days after the first day of the pay period, which was [REDACTED]. Hartford Casualty issued payment on [REDACTED] which was 35 days late.
- Hartford Casualty was required to pay TIBs to an injured employee for the period of [REDACTED] through [REDACTED]. The TIBs payment was due seven days after the first day of the pay period, which was [REDACTED]. Hartford Casualty issued payment on [REDACTED] which was 28 days late.

Assessment of Sanction

- Failure to provide income benefits in a timely and cost-effective manner is harmful to injured employees and the Texas workers' compensation system.
- 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;
 - 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;
 - the history of compliance with electronic data interchange 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 penalty necessary to deter future violations; and whether the administrative violation had a negative impact on the delivery of benefits to an injured employee.
 4. DWC found the following factors in TEX. LAB. CODE § 415.021(c) and 28 TEX. ADMIN. CODE § 180.26(e) to be mitigating: promptness and earnestness in responding to DWC; the injured employee received a work bonus that retroactively reduced the amount of TIBs that were owed to \$0, and Hartford Casualty was not aware of this until after benefits were paid; the employer did not timely provide a wage statement for the injured employee, which required Hartford Casualty to estimate TIBs that were owed for the period in question; and Hartford Casualty has provided training to its adjusters for Texas claims on timely and properly investigating lost time claims.
 5. Hartford Casualty 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. Hartford Casualty 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, 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. Hartford Casualty 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 §§ 408.081, 408.082, and 409.021 and 28 TEX. ADMIN. CODE §§ 124.3 and 124.7, an insurance carrier is required to initiate payment of TIBs no later than the 15th day after it receives written notice of the injury or the seventh day after the accrual date, unless the insurance carrier notifies DWC and the injured employee in writing of its refusal to pay.
9. Hartford Casualty violated TEX. LAB. CODE §§ 409.021 and 415.002(a)(20) and (22) each time it failed to timely initiate payment of TIBs.

Order

It is ordered that Hartford Casualty Insurance Company must pay an administrative penalty of \$2,500 within 30 days from the date of this order. Hartford Casualty Insurance Company 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:



Mackenzie Arthur
Staff Attorney, Enforcement
Compliance and Investigations
Division of Workers' Compensation

Unsworn Declaration

STATE OF California §
§
COUNTY OF Sacramento §

Pursuant to TEX. CIV. PRAC. & REM. CODE § 132.001(a), (b), and (d), my name is Julie Riddle I hold the position of Assistant Director, Claim Compliance and am the authorized representative of Hartford Casualty Insurance Company. My business address is:

4245 Meridian Parkway, Suite 200, Aurora, DuPage, IL, 60504.

(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.

Julie Riddle

Declarant

Executed on July 23, 2021.