

No. 2022-7668

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

**Date:** 12/7/2022

**Subject Considered:**

American Zurich Insurance Company  
1299 Zurich Way  
Schaumburg, Illinois 60196-1091

Consent Order  
DWC Enforcement File No. 29554, 29892, & 30037

**General remarks and official action taken:**

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

**Waiver**

Respondent acknowledges that the Texas Labor Code and other applicable laws provide certain rights. Respondent 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. Respondent 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. Respondent was classified as "average" tier in the 2007, 2009, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, and 2020 Performance Based Oversight (PBO) assessments.

Failure to Timely Pay Impairment Income Benefits As and When They Accrue

*File No. 29554*

3. Respondent was required to pay impairment income benefits (IIBs) to an injured employee from [REDACTED] through [REDACTED]. The IIBs payments were due seven days after the first day of each pay period. Respondent failed to timely issue the IIBs payments as follows:

	<b>Payment Period</b>	<b>Date Due</b>	<b>Date Paid</b>	<b>Days Late</b>
a.	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	6
b.	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	7

*File No. 29892*

4. Respondent was required to pay IIBs to an injured employee from [REDACTED] through [REDACTED]. The IIBs payments were due seven days after the first day of each pay period. Respondent failed to timely issue the IIBs payments as follows:

	<b>Payment Period</b>	<b>Date Due</b>	<b>Date Paid</b>	<b>Days Late</b>
a.	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	26
b.	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	19
c.	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	12
d.	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	5

*File No.30037*

5. Respondent was required to pay IIBs to an injured employee from [REDACTED] through [REDACTED]. The IIBs payments were due seven days after the first day of each pay period. Respondent failed to timely issue the IIBs payments as follows:

	<b>Payment Period</b>	<b>Date Due</b>	<b>Date Paid</b>	<b>Days Late</b>
a.	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	18
b.	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	11
c.	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	4

### **Assessment of Sanction**

1. Failure to provide income benefits in a timely and cost-effective manner is harmful to injured employees 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;
  - 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; whether the administrative violation had a negative impact on the delivery of benefits to an injured employee; and other matters that justice may require, including but not limited to evidence of heightened awareness of the legal duty to comply with the Texas Workers' Compensation Act and DWC rules.
4. DWC found the following factors in Tex. Lab. Code § 415.021(c) and 28 Tex. Admin. Code § 180.26(e) to be mitigating: prompt and earnest actions to prevent future

violations of this type. The adjuster responsible for the claim in Enforcement File No. 30037 was counseled on avoiding late payments. Additionally, all of Respondent's adjusters attended TDI sponsored training on July 7, 2022.

5. Respondent acknowledges communicating with DWC about the relevant statute and rule violations alleged; that the facts establish that the administrative violation(s) occurred; and that 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. Respondent 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, 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. Respondent 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 § 408.121(b) and 28 Tex. Admin. Code § 130.8, an employee's entitlement to IIBs begins the day after the employee reaches maximum medical improvement (MMI) and, when the date of MMI is not disputed, the carrier shall initiate payment of IIBs on or before the fifth day after the date of receipt of the employee's treating doctor's medical evaluation report. IIBs shall continue weekly unless the injured employee and insurance carrier agree to change

the frequency of payments by written agreement pursuant to 28 Tex. Admin. Code § 130.11.

6. 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.
7. 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.
8. 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
9. Respondent violated Tex. Lab. Code §§ 408.081; 415.002(a)(16), (20) and (22) and 28 Tex. Admin. Code § 130.8 each time it failed to timely issue payment of IIBs.

**Order**

It is ordered that American Zurich Insurance Company must pay an administrative penalty of \$12,000 within 30 days from the date of this order. American Zurich 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.

  
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Jeff Nelson  
Commissioner  
TDI, Division of Workers' Compensation

Approved Form and Content:

  
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Austin Southerland  
Staff Attorney, Enforcement  
Compliance and Investigations  
TDI, Division of Workers' Compensation

**Unsworn Declaration**

**STATE OF** IL §  
§  
**COUNTY OF** Cook §

Pursuant to the Tex. Civ. Prac. and Rem. Code § 132.001(a), (b), and (d), my name is Joseph Ragonese. I hold the position of Claims Governance & QA Director and am the authorized representative of American Zurich Insurance Company. My business address is:

1299 Zurich Way, Schaumburg, Cook, IL, 60196.  
(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.

Joseph Ragonese

Declarant

Executed on November 30, 2022.