

§ 143-215.94I. Insurance pools authorized; requirements.

(a) As used in this section, "Commissioner" means the Commissioner of Insurance of the State of North Carolina.

(b) Owners and operators of underground storage tanks may demonstrate financial responsibility by establishing insurance pools which provide insurance coverage to pool members in at least the minimum amounts specified in G.S. 143-215.94H. Each such pool shall be operated by a board of trustees consisting of at least five persons who are elected or appointed officials of pool members. The board of trustees of each pool shall:

- (1) Establish terms and conditions of coverage within the pool, including underwriting criteria, applicable deductible levels, the maximum level of claims that the pool will self-insure, and exclusions of coverage;
 - (2) Ensure that all valid claims are paid promptly;
 - (3) Take all necessary precautions to safeguard the assets of the pool;
 - (4) Maintain minutes of its meetings and make those minutes available to the Commissioner;
 - (5) Designate an administrator to carry out the policies established by the board of trustees and to provide continual management of the pool, and delineate in written minutes of its meetings the areas of authority it delegates to the pool's administrator;
 - (6) Establish the amount of insurance to be purchased by the pool to provide coverage over and above the claims that are not to be satisfied directly from the pool's resources;
 - (7) Establish the amount, if any, of aggregate excess insurance coverage to be purchased and maintained in the event that the pool's resources are exhausted in a given fiscal period; and
 - (8) Establish guidelines for membership in the pool, including the amount of money to be collected from each pool member to form and fund the pool.
- (c) The board of trustees may not:
- (1) Extend credit to individual members for payment of a premium, except pursuant to payment plans approved by the Commissioner; or
 - (2) Borrow any monies from the pool or in the name of the pool, except in the ordinary course of business, without first advising the Commissioner of the nature and purpose of the loan and obtaining prior approval from the Commissioner.
- (d) A contract or agreement made pursuant to this section must contain provisions:
- (1) For a system or program of loss control;
 - (2) For termination of membership including both:
 - a. Cancellation of individual membership in the pool by the pool; and
 - b. Election by an individual member of the pool to terminate its participation;
 - (3) That a pool or a terminating member must provide at least 90 days' written notice of cancellation or termination;
 - (4) Requiring the pool to pay all claims for which each member incurs liability during each member's period of membership, except:
 - a. Where a member has individually retained the risk;
 - b. Where the risk is not covered; or
 - c. For amounts of claims above the coverage provided by the pool;
 - (5) For the maintenance of claim reserves equal to known incurred losses and loss adjustment expenses and to an estimate of incurred but not reported losses;

- (6) For compliance with any applicable federal requirements regarding financial responsibility for underground storage tanks;
- (7) For a final accounting and settlement of the obligations of or refunds to a terminating member to occur when all incurred claims are concluded, settled, or paid;
- (8) That the pool may establish offices where necessary in this State and employ necessary staff to carry out the purposes of the pool;
- (9) That the pool may retain legal counsel, actuaries, claims adjusters, auditors, engineers, private consultants, and advisors, and other persons as the board of trustees or the administrator deems to be necessary;
- (10) That the pool may make and alter bylaws and rules pertaining to the exercise of its purpose and powers;
- (11) That the pool may purchase, lease, or rent real and personal property it deems to be necessary; and
- (12) That the pool may enter into financial services agreements with financial institutions and that it may issue checks in its own name.

(e) In the event that either the pool or an individual pool member gives notice of an intent to cancel or terminate participation in the pool as provided by subdivision (4) of subsection (d) of this section, the pool shall so notify both the Commissioner and the Secretary within five business days of the issuance or receipt of such notice by the pool. In addition, the pool shall notify both the Commissioner and the Secretary within five business days of the date such cancellation or termination becomes effective, unless notice of cancellation or termination is rescinded.

(f) The formation and operation of an insurance pool under this section shall be subject to approval by the Commissioner who shall, after notice and hearing, establish reasonable requirements and rules for the approval and monitoring of such pools, including prior approval of pool administrators and provisions for periodic examinations of financial condition. The Commissioner may disapprove an application for the formation of an insurance pool, and may suspend or withdraw such approval whenever he finds that such applicant or pool:

- (1) Has refused to submit its books, papers, accounts, or affairs to the reasonable inspection of the Commissioner or his representative;
- (2) Has refused, or its officers, agents, or administrators have refused, to furnish satisfactory evidence of its financial and business standing or solvency;
- (3) Is insolvent, or is in such condition that its further transaction of business in this State is hazardous to its members and creditors in this State and to the public;
- (4) Has refused or neglected to pay a valid final judgment against it within 60 days after its rendition;
- (5) Has violated any law of this State or has violated or exceeded the powers granted by its members;
- (6) Has failed to pay any taxes, fees, or charges imposed in this State within 60 days after they are due and payable, or within 60 days after final disposition or any legal contest with respect to liability therefor; or
- (7) Has been found insolvent by a court of any other state, by the insurance regulator or other proper officer or agency of any other state, and has been prohibited from doing business in such state.

(g) Each pool shall be audited annually at the expense of the pool by a certified public accounting firm, with a copy of the report available to the governing body or chief executive officer of each member of the pool and to the Commissioner. The board of trustees of the pool shall obtain an appropriate actuarial evaluation of the loss and loss adjustment expense reserves

of the pool, including an estimate of losses and loss adjustment expenses incurred but not reported. The provisions of G.S. 58-2-131, 58-2-132, 58-2-133, 58-2-134, 58-2-150, 58-2-155, 58-2-165, 58-2-180, 58-2-185, 58-2-190, 58-2-200, and 58-6-5 apply to each pool and to persons that administer the pools. Annual financial statements required by G.S. 58-2-165 shall be filed by each pool within 60 days after the end of the pool's fiscal year. All financial statements required by this section shall be prepared in accordance with generally accepted statutory accounting principles.

(h) If, as a result of the annual audit or an examination by the Commissioner, it appears that the assets of a pool are insufficient to enable the pool to discharge its legal liabilities and other obligations, the Commissioner shall notify the administrator and the board of trustees of the pool of the deficiency and his list of recommendations to abate the deficiency, including a recommendation not to add any new members until the deficiency is abated. If the pool fails to comply with the recommendations within 30 days after the date of the notice, the Commissioner may apply to the Superior Court of Wake County for an order requiring the pool to abate the deficiency and authorizing the Commissioner to appoint one or more special deputy commissioners, counsel, clerks, or assistants to oversee the implementation of the Court's order. The Commissioner has all of the powers granted to him under Article 17A of General Statute Chapter 58 relating to rehabilitation and liquidation of insurers; and the provisions of that Article apply to this section to the extent they are not in conflict with this section. The compensation and expenses of such persons shall be fixed by the Commissioner, subject to the approval of the Court, and shall be paid out of the funds or assets of the pool.

(i) Each pool contract shall provide that the members of the pool shall be assessed on a pro rata basis as calculated by the amount of each member's average annual contribution in order to satisfy the amount of any deficiency where a pool is determined to be insolvent, financially impaired, or is otherwise found to be unable to discharge its legal liabilities and other obligations.

(j) In the event that the Commissioner finds that a pool is insolvent, financially impaired, or otherwise, unable to discharge its legal liabilities or obligations, or if the Commissioner at any time has reason to believe that any owner or operator is unable to demonstrate financial responsibility as required by G.S. 143-215.94H and rules adopted by the Commission as a result of the financial condition of the pool or for any other reason, the Commissioner shall so notify the Secretary.

(k) The provisions of Article 48 of Chapter 58 do not apply to any risks retained by any pool.

(l) The Department of Insurance, in consultation with the Department of Environmental Quality, shall provide guidance and technical assistance for the formation of an insurance pool pursuant to G.S. 143-215.94I to any responsible entity that requests assistance. (1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1035, s. 1; 1989, c. 652, s. 11; 1995, c. 193, s. 66; 1999-132, s. 11.11; 2008-195, s. 10; 2011-266, s. 1.20(c); 2015-241, s. 14.30(u).)