

Market Conduct Final Examination Report

***RELIABLE PREMIUM FINANCE COMPANY,
INC.***

Florida Company Code: 89010

July 19, 2023



Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
Company Operations.....	2
Purpose and Scope of the Examination	3
Complaint Statistics.....	3
Examination Procedures	4
Findings.....	5
Recommendations.....	5
Conclusion	6
Examination Final Report Submission	6

Executive Summary

A market conduct examination of Reliable Premium Finance, Inc., (“Reliable Premium” or “Company”) was performed to ascertain the Company’s compliance with the applicable provisions of the Florida Insurance Code as required by Section 627.834(2), Florida Statutes (“F.S.”).

Company Operations

Reliable Premium is a domestic Premium Finance Company licensed to offer premium finance agreements in Florida on March 22, 1979. Mr. Howard T. Johnston, Jr., serves as President. Reliable Premium finances personal and commercial lines insurance policies.

Total Premiums Receivable in Florida during the examination scope period was as follows:

Year	Total Premiums Receivable in Florida (Per Schedule A of the Annual Report)
2021	\$1,415,458
2020	\$1,552,910
2019	\$1,352,764

Section 627.828(1), F.S. requires premium finance companies to maintain a net worth of \$35,000 or a net worth of \$10,000 if a surety bond or other acceptable collateral is approved by the Florida Office of Insurance Regulation (“OIR”). The Company met the requirements of Section 627.828(1), F.S. by reporting the following statutory net worth:

Year	Statutory Net Worth as of December 31 st (Per the Balance Sheet of the Annual Report)
2021	\$334,678
2020	\$410,811
2019	\$387,812

Section 627.836(2), F.S. requires premium finance companies to file an annual report with OIR and remit the annual report filing fee to the Florida Department of Financial Services (“DFS”) by March 1st of each year. The Company met the requirements of Section 627.836(2), F.S. by timely filing both the annual report and the annual report filing fees prior to March 1st for each year during the examination scope period as follows:

Year	Date Annual Report Filed with OIR	Date Annual Report Filing Fees Remitted to DFS
2021	02/15/2022	01/31/2022
2020	02/01/2021	02/01/2021
2019	02/14/2020	02/14/2020

Purpose and Scope of the Examination

OIR has primary responsibility for the regulation, compliance and enforcement of statutes related to the business of insurance premium financing and the monitoring of industry markets. OIR is required to examine each premium finance company not less frequently than every three years, pursuant to Section 627.834(2), F.S. Due to this responsibility, OIR conducted a market conduct examination of Reliable Premium. The examination scope period was from January 1, 2019, to December 31, 2021. The examination was performed by members of OIR's Property and Casualty Market Regulation business unit.

The purpose of a market conduct examination is to review the premium finance company's operating practices to determine if they comply with the applicable provisions of the Florida Insurance Code, rules related to the business of insurance premium financing, the provisions contained within a premium finance contract issued by the Company, or orders issued by OIR. A common element of all market conduct examinations is to evaluate a premium finance company's business practices to promote the protection of insurance-buying consumers and to hold entities regulated by OIR accountable when issues or violations are found.

The examination began April 1, 2022 and ended July 18, 2023. The last examination of Reliable Premium was completed as of December 31, 2018. That examination concluded the company's records were in good standing.

Complaint Statistics

As of December 31, 2021, DFS Division of Consumer Services reported receiving one complaint related to premium finance agreements issued by Reliable Premium to consumers during the examination scope period. A review of the Company's consumer complaints by reason category, as assigned by DFS, reflects that one consumer reported experiencing a billing issue. DFS defines a complaint regarding an invoice or billing issue as a consumer receiving an invoice or bill which they do not understand or dispute owing. The complaint was closed after DFS explained the Company's position to the consumer. DFS did not issue a notice to OIR of an alleged violation of the Florida Insurance Code after closing the complaint.

Complaints Reported to DFS by Consumers	
Year	Number of Complaints
2021	1
2020	0
2019	0

Examination Procedures

The conduct of this examination and the procedures, statistical sampling and examination processes used were consistent with and in accordance with those standards and procedures contained in the *Market Regulation Handbook* promulgated by the National Association of Insurance Commissioners (“NAIC”).

In preparation for the examination, the Company was requested to provide the total number, or universe, of premium finance agreements entered into during the examination’s scope period. The Company was also requested to identify premium finance agreements that were cancelled or received a refund from an insurer prior to the end of the premium finance agreement’s contract term. The Company reported entering into a total of 13,623 premium finance agreements during the examination scope period. Of the 13,623 premium finance agreements, 2,753 premium finance agreements were either cancelled or received a refund from the insurer or premium finance company prior to the end of the agreement’s term.

To facilitate a thorough review of the Company’s premium finance agreements and corresponding documentation, the total universe of premium finance agreements was divided into two categories: Premium Finance Agreements and Cancellations and Refunds. Each of the two categories were evaluated for compliance with the Florida Insurance Code.

The Company reported the universe of premium finance agreements for each category as follows:

- 10,870 Premium Finance Agreements; and
- 2,753 Cancellations and Refunds.

For purposes of this examination, the two categories were defined as follows:

- Premium Finance Agreements: The initial premium finance agreement entered into during the examination scope period that completed the full term of the agreement (the premium finance agreement was not cancelled midterm or the consumer was not eligible for a refund); and
- Cancellation and Refunds: The initial premium finance agreements entered into during the examination scope period that were either cancelled prior to the end of the agreement’s term or were eligible for a refund from an insurer or the premium finance company.

The NAIC’s *Market Regulation Handbook* provides guidance regarding sampling methods utilized during market conduct examinations. A minimum confidence level of 95% is used to make inferences when a universe population is greater than 200 and permits those results to be extrapolated to the population of all premium finance agreements. The examiners reviewed a total of 231 randomly selected premium finance agreements. The number of randomly selected premium finance agreements in each sample is consistent with the recommended sample size for non-claims in the NAIC’s *Market Regulation Handbook*’s Acceptance Samples Table. Examination results with a 95% confidence level permit those results to be extrapolated to the population of non-claims in each of the two premium finance agreement categories. Based on the total universe of Reliable Premium’s premium finance agreements subject to this examination, the total sample size required to achieve a 95% confidence level in both categories was determined to be 231.

The 231 randomly selected premium finance agreements consisted of:

- 116 premium finance agreements; and
- 115 cancellations and refunds.

In reviewing materials for this report, the examiners relied on records and information provided by the Company.

Findings

Premium Finance Agreements

This portion of the examination focused on the Company's use of approved forms and rates and evaluated specific statutory components required by the Company in the execution of premium finance agreements, including but not limited to finance charges, service fees, late and non-sufficient fund fees, and products financed. To determine the Company's adherence to these statutory requirements, the examiners reviewed and analyzed each sampled premium finance agreement to determine if the agreement was executed in compliance with the Florida Insurance Code.

Finding 1: The examiners determined that in eight instances out of 116 premium finance agreements reviewed, an error percentage of 6.9%, the Company assessed service charges in excess of statutory limits, as permitted by Section 627.840(3)(b), Florida Statutes.

Company Response:

The Company agreed with the finding responding: "The finance management program experienced an error that was identified and corrected."

Cancellations and Refunds

Finding 2: The examiners determined that in one instance out of 115 premium finance agreements reviewed, an error percentage of 0.9%, the Company issued a refund to the insured more than 15 days after the account had been over paid, as required by Section 627.848(1)(e), Florida Statutes.

Company Response: The Company agreed with the finding.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were compiled from the Findings contained within this report, and observations noted during the examination. The Company is to provide a written report to OIR of actions taken on each Recommendation within 60 days of the Company's receipt of the Final Examination Report.

It is recommended that the Company:

- Ensure refunds are made within 15 days of accounts entering a credit balance.
- Ensure service charges assessed are within statutory limits.

Conclusion

This market conduct examination of Reliable Premium Finance, Inc., was designed to review and evaluate whether the Company's handling of premium finance agreements was in compliance with the provisions of the Florida Insurance Code. During the examination, OIR identified findings and made recommendations for remediation to be implemented by the Company.

This examination report and the observations contained therein are the result of a factual, data-driven analysis of the Company's premium finance agreements and practices related to the cancellation and refund of premiums to consumers. This report contains a number of recommendations for improvement that should be implemented by the Company. It does not document what regulatory or administrative action may be taken by the Office. Any such action taken as a result of this market conduct examination will be the subject of a separate Order issued by the Office.

Examination Final Report Submission

The courtesy and cooperation of the officers and employees of the Company during the examination are acknowledged and appreciated.



www.FLOIR.com

J. Edwin Larson Building
200 E. Gaines Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399
Phone: (850) 413-3140