

265—9.8 (16) Claims.

9.8(1) *Claim procedures.* In the event of a claim, the rights of the division and a party are as follows:

a. Upon receipt of notice by a party of a claim, the party must notify the division in writing within three business days of receipt of information about a claim by the party and shall mail notification to the division by first-class mail at the division's address as set forth in subrule 9.4(1). In addition, if the nature of the claim is such that the guaranteed claimant or the division, or both, may suffer loss or damage that might be reduced or avoided by notice given more promptly than required by the preceding sentence, the party shall notify the division by telephone, facsimile transmission, e-mail, overnight mail or other overnight delivery service, or any combination of these methods.

b. When a party receives a request from the division for information with respect to a claim, the party shall supply to the division any documents, correspondence, surveys, abstracts of title, title searches, other writings, or other information known by or available to the party and relevant to the claim, even if not specifically requested by the division.

c. A party shall cooperate fully in the investigation and resolution of a claim and shall supply any additional, new information that may come to the party's attention with such promptness as the circumstances permit.

d. The division may, with or without prior notice to the party or parties involved, investigate and resolve any claim in any manner that, in the division's sole discretion, the division may deem advisable.

9.8(2) *Claim loss recovery.*

a. Any claim losses paid are recoverable from a party by the division.

b. In the absence of knowledge by the party about the title defect or other matter causing the claim loss, the division shall not seek recovery from the party when a claim loss arises from one or more of the following:

(1) Hidden defects, including, but not limited to, forged deeds and mortgages, false affidavits, and false statements of marital status;

(2) Errors by public officials in maintaining and indexing the public records, including, but not limited to, errors by county assessors, recorders, clerks, and treasurers;

(3) Errors in these rules, manuals, and any other written instructions given by the division that the party relies upon in issuing an abstract, title opinion, commitment or certificate;

(4) Errors in surveys provided by registered Iowa land surveyors that the party relies upon in issuing a certificate that provides survey coverage; or

(5) Underwriting determinations or title risks approved by the division prior to issuance of the abstract, title opinion, commitment, or certificate.

c. The party shall reimburse the division for a claim loss when the division determines, in accordance with paragraph 9.8(2)“*d*,” that the party is liable and when the claim loss arises from one or more of the following:

(1) Errors by the party in the preparation of an abstract or any other report of information in the public record;

(2) Reliance by the party upon sources of title searches and other title information that had not been approved by the division at the time of the reliance;

(3) Errors made by the party in examining the title information provided in an abstract, survey, affidavit, or other source of title information;

(4) Errors made by the party in the preparation or review of an abstract, title opinion, commitment or certificate;

(5) Issuance of an abstract, title opinion, commitment or certificate by the party with knowledge that title is defective; or

(6) Failure of the party to follow the Code of Iowa, these rules, manuals, or any other written instructions given by the division.

d. Unless another rule, the Code of Iowa, manuals, or any other written instruction given by the division provides for a different standard of liability or other rule for determining whether the party shall be liable for a claim loss, the division shall apply the following standards:

(1) In the event that a claim loss occurs for which the division may seek recovery from the party under subparagraph 9.8(2)“c”(1), the division may demand reimbursement from the party if the party was grossly negligent in preparing the abstract. Gross negligence includes the failure to make a search or the use of inadequate search procedures. Gross negligence under the preceding sentence includes but is not limited to failure to search certain indices, failure to search all names of parties with an interest in the real estate, or failure to search in all public offices required by the division search procedures or procedures used by prudent title searchers if the division has not established specific search procedures. In making its determination whether to seek recovery, the division may consider the complexity of the public record, the reliance of the party upon division-approved search procedures, the training and experience of the person who made the error, and the existence or nonexistence of previous search errors by the party.

(2) In the event that a claim loss occurs for which the division may seek recovery from a party under subparagraph 9.8(2)“c”(2), the division may demand reimbursement from that party if the party relied upon sources of abstracts or other title information that had not been approved by the division at the time of the reliance.

(3) In the event that a claim loss occurs for which the division may seek recovery from the party under subparagraph 9.8(2)“c”(3), the division may demand reimbursement from the party if the party negligently examined the title information used in making a title determination, failed to raise an appropriate exception, waived an exception, or endorsed a commitment or certificate.

1. The division may make full review of local county abstracting standards and bar title rules as a guide to determine whether the party has failed to meet the standard of skill and competence of an abstractor who prepares an abstract or an attorney who examines titles in the community where the claim arose.

2. The division may also consider whether the party followed the Code of Iowa, these rules, manuals, or any other written instructions given by the division in examining the title.

3. In addition, the division may seek input from other parties in the community in which the claim arose as to the standard of care of an abstractor who prepares an abstract or of an attorney who examines titles in that community.

(4) In the event that a claim loss occurs for which the division may seek recovery from the party under subparagraph 9.8(2)“c”(4), the division may demand reimbursement from the party if the party negligently prepared or reviewed an abstract, title opinion, commitment or certificate.

(5) In the event that a claim loss occurs for which the division may seek recovery from the party under subparagraph 9.8(2)“c”(5), the division may demand reimbursement from the party if the issuance of the abstract, title opinion, commitment or certificate constituted fraud, concealment or dishonesty, or if the issuance of the abstract, title opinion, commitment or certificate was based upon an underwriting decision on an unusual risk that was made without contacting the division for approval.

(6) In the event that a claim loss occurs for which the division may seek recovery from the party under subparagraph 9.8(2)“c”(6), the division may demand reimbursement from the party if the party failed to follow the Code of Iowa, these rules, manuals, or any other written instructions given by the division with respect to the matter causing the claim loss.

(7) In the event the division seeks reimbursement from a party, the division shall state the basis of the reimbursement.

e. The division board may establish levels of authority, including dollar amounts, for the division for the settlement of claims made against the division.