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Missouri Department of Insurance fines title insurance company \$500,000

Jefferson City, Mo. -The state Insurance Department has handed down a \$500,000 fine to a title insurance company for numerous violations of Missouri insurance laws. The department recently completed an examination of four title companies owned by Florida-based Fidelity National Financial Group. The exam found incorrect premiums and fees were charged to consumers at the time of real estate closings, as well as the use of insurance policies that had not been approved by the department, as required by law.

In addition to the fines, the companies have agreed to correct certain business practices and refund money to consumers who were overcharged on the fees they paid when closing on their property.

Title insurance protects landowners and lenders in the event of a claim against the property, based on a problem that existed before the land was purchased. The claim could pertain to a lien, unpaid real estate taxes, incorrect boundary lines or other problems.

"Closing on a real estate purchase can be an overwhelming process for consumers, who often have to review and sign dozens of legal documents," said John M. Huff, director of the Missouri Department of Insurance, Financial Institutions and Professional Registration (DIFP). "Most homebuyers don't pay close attention to the title insurance process, so lenders, title insurers and our department all play a vital role in making sure consumers are protected in these transactions."

The four companies examined by the department's Market Conduct Section are Fidelity National Title Insurance Co. (\$50,000 fine), Commonwealth Land Title Insurance Co. (\$190,000), Lawyers Title Insurance Corp. (\$190,000) and Transnation Title Insurance Co. (\$70,000).

In a market conduct exam of an insurance company, the department reviews thousands of company documents regarding the treatment of policyholders, from the rates they charge to the way they handle claims to other responsibilities under state law. Exams can result in refunds for consumers, fines and corrections in business practices, as well as other remedies.

Since the beginning of 2008, the Market Conduct Section has recovered more than \$6 million in refunds for consumers and collected nearly \$3 million in fines, which by law go to the Missouri State School Fund.

Consumers with insurance questions or complaints can contact the Missouri Department of Insurance [online](#) or at **1-800-726-7390**.

About the Missouri Department of Insurance, Financial Institutions & Professional Registration

The Missouri Department of Insurance, Financial Institutions and Professional Registration (DIFP) is responsible for consumer protection through the regulation of financial industries and professionals. The department's seven divisions work to enforce state regulations both efficiently and effectively while encouraging a competitive environment for industries and professions to ensure consumers have access to quality products.

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