

Google seeks approval to fund benefit risks through Hawaii captive

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WASHINGTON—Google Inc. has asked the Labor Department for approval to fund benefits risks through its Hawaii captive insurance company.

The Mountain View, Calif.-based search engine and high technology giant wants to use Imi Assurance Inc. to reinsure life insurance, accidental death and dismemberment, and long-term disability policies written by Prudential Insurance Co. of America, according to an application submitted this week by George O'Donnell, senior vp in the Somerset, N.J., office of Aon Hewitt Inc.



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Imi was licensed by Hawaii regulators in December 2010 and is authorized to write property and casualty coverage.

Activity in captive funding

Google's application comes amid a spurt of activity in the captive benefits funding arena. For example, Microsoft Corp. (/article/20111028/NEWS03/111029893) last month filed an application with the Labor Department for approval to use the Vermont branch of its Bermuda captive—Orcas Ltd.—to reinsure life insurance and AD&D policies, also written by Prudential. Microsoft already uses the Vermont branch to reinsure LTD coverage.

Also last month, the Labor Department gave tentative authorization to Dow Corning Corp. (/article/20111017/NEWS03/111019917) to expand benefit risks through its Washington-based captive.

Under the arrangement, Midland, Mich.-based Dow Corning, a joint venture of Dow Chemical Corp. and Corning Inc., would use its captive, Devonshire Underwriters Ltd., to fund basic life insurance benefits. Minnesota Life Insurance Co. would reinsure the risk with Devonshire.

In 2009, the Labor Department approved an arrangement in which Devonshire reinsured certain other types of life insurance coverage written by Minnesota Life, as well as long-term disability coverage written by Aetna Life Insurance Co.

In September, the Labor Department proposed allowing freight carrier R+L Carriers Shared Services L.L.C. (/article/20110926/NEWS03/110929888) to fund its employee benefit risks through a captive insurer. Under the proposal, Wilmington, Ohio-based R+L would use Royal Assurance Inc., a captive licensed in Arizona, to reinsure accidental death and dismemberment benefits, life, and long-term and short-term disability risks that are insured by a unit of Unum Group.