Statutory Accounting Principles (E) Working Group

**Maintenance Agenda Submission Form**

**Form A**

## **Issue: Sale Leaseback Clarification**

**Check (applicable entity):**

P/C Life Health

Modification of Existing SSAP

New Issue or SSAP

Interpretation

Description of Issue: NAIC staff received a question related to a potential sales leaseback transaction that included a significant restriction to the cash received as part of the sale of the assets, and if such a transaction would meet the definition of a sale leaseback in accordance with *SSAP No. 22—Leases*. In the transaction, the company was able to sell the nonadmitted asset to an unaffiliated party, but as a part of the transaction, the cash the seller received was to be held in such a manner that the selling insurance company would not be able access the cash until the leaseback was fully paid off years in the future. This agenda item intends to provide guidance that sales leaseback accounting would not be applicable in situations in which the selling insurer is restricted from readily accessing the sales proceeds. In such instances the financing method would be required.

Existing Authoritative Literature:

SSAP No. 22:

**Sale-Leaseback Transactions**

1. Sale-leaseback transactions involve the sale of property, plant or equipment by the owner and a lease of the property, plant or equipment back to the seller. Sale-leaseback accounting is a method of accounting in which the seller-lessee records the sale and removes all property, plant or equipment and related liabilities from its balance sheet. The definition of property, plant and equipment eligible for sale-leaseback treatment is in paragraph 3. As noted in paragraph 3, non-depreciable assets, including investments and premium receivables, do not meet the definition of property, plant or equipment, are not allowed to be included in lease transactions, and therefore, are not allowed to be included in sale-leaseback transactions. Assets that do not meet the definition of property, plant and equipment in paragraph 3 may only be used in sale-leaseback transactions as permitted practices with regulatory approval.
2. A sale of property, plant or equipment that is accompanied by a leaseback of all or any part of the property, plant or equipment for all or part of its *remaining* economic life shall be accounted for by the buyer-lessor and seller-lessee as a purchase and operating lease and a sale and an operating lease, respectively, unless the sale-leaseback includes sale of nonadmitted assets to a related party. If the transaction involves a sale of nonadmitted assets to a related party, the transaction shall be accounted for by the deposit method detailed in paragraph 37.
3. Sale-leaseback accounting shall be used by a seller-lessee only if a sale-leaseback transaction includes all of the following:

a. A normal leaseback is a lessee-lessor relationship that involves active use of the property by the seller-lessee in consideration for payment of rent, including contingent rentals that are based on future operations of the seller-lessee. The phrase active use of the property by the seller-lessee refers to use of the property during the lease term in the seller-lessee’s trade or business, provided that subleasing of the leased property is minor.

b. Admitted assets, if the buyer-lessor is a related party, or either admitted or nonadmitted assets if the buyer-lessor is not a related party. For purposes of this paragraph, related parties include those identified in SSAP No. 25 and entities created for the purpose of buying and leasing nonadmitted assets for the reporting entity and/or its affiliates.

1. Under sale-leaseback accounting, any profit on the sale shall be deferred and amortized in proportion to the related gross rental charged to expense over the lease term, with the exception of a sale of real estate settled entirely in cash.
2. A sale of real estate, settled entirely in cash, that is accompanied by a leaseback of all or any part of the property, plant or equipment for all or part of its remaining economic life shall be accounted for by the buyer-lessor and seller-lessee as a purchase and operating lease and a sale and an operating lease, respectively. The sale and gain shall be recognized directly to special surplus funds and subsequently amortized to unassigned funds (surplus) over the lease term.

Deposit Method and Financing Method

36. The deposit method is used when the transaction involves a sale-leaseback of nonadmitted assets to a related party. To the extent that leases between related parties are, in substance, arms-length transactions the guidance in this statement shall be applied. The determination of whether related party leases qualify as arms-length transactions is addressed in SSAP No. 25.

37. If a sale-leaseback transaction is accounted for by the deposit method, lease payments decrease and collections on the buyer-lessor's note, if any, increase the seller-lessee's deposit account. The sale-leaseback assets identified in paragraph 31 and any related debt continue to be included in the seller-lessee's balance sheet, and the seller-lessee continues to depreciate the sale-leaseback assets. A seller-lessee that is accounting for any transaction by the deposit method shall recognize a loss if at any time the net carrying amount of the sale-leaseback assets exceeds the sum of the balance in the deposit account, the fair value of the unrecorded note receivable and any debt assumed by the buyer.

38. If a sale-leaseback transaction is accounted for by the deposit method and then subsequently qualifies for sales recognition under paragraph 33, the transaction is accounted for using sale-leaseback accounting, and the gain or loss is recognized in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 34 of this statement. In addition, the leaseback is classified and accounted for in accordance with this statement as if the sale had been recognized at the inception of the lease. The change in the related lease accounts that would have been recorded from the inception of the lease had the transaction initially qualified for sale-leaseback accounting is included in computing the gain or loss recognized in accordance with paragraph 34 of this statement.

39. A sale-leaseback transaction that does not qualify for sale-leaseback accounting nor the deposit method shall be accounted for by the financing method. Under this method the seller-lessee shall not derecognize the transferred asset and shall account for any amounts received as a financial liability and the buyer-lessor shall not recognize the transferred asset and shall account for the amounts paid as a receivable.

40. If a sale-leaseback transaction is reported as under the financing method, lease payments, exclusive of an interest portion, decrease and collections on the buyer-lessor's note increase the seller-lessee's liability account with a portion of the lease payments being recognized under the interest method. The seller-lessee reports the sales proceeds as a liability, continues to report the sale-leaseback assets identified in paragraph 31 as an asset and continues to depreciate the sale-leaseback assets.

41. If a sale-leaseback transaction accounted for under the financing method subsequently qualifies under paragraph 33, the transaction is then recorded using sale-leaseback accounting, and the cumulative change in the related balance sheet accounts is included in the computation of the gain recognized in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 34 of this statement. In addition, the leaseback is classified and accounted for as an operating lease as if the sale had been recognized at the inception of the lease. The change in the related lease accounts from the inception of the lease to the date the sale is recognized is included in the gain recognized in accordance with paragraph 34 of this statement.

Activity to Date (issues previously addressed by the Working Group, Emerging Accounting Issues (E) Working Group, SEC, FASB, other State Departments of Insurance or other NAIC groups): None

**Information or issues (included in *Description of Issue*) not previously contemplated by the Working Group:**

None

**Convergence with International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS):** The larger agenda item 2016-02 worked on the FASB project that brought U.S. GAAP accounting to be more similar to the methodology used under IFRS, but this treatment was rejected for statutory accounting and the operating lease treatment was retained.

Staff Review Completed by:

Jake Stultz, NAIC Staff – February 2025

Staff Recommendation: NAIC staff recommends that the Working Group move this item to the active listing, categorized as a SAP clarification, and expose revisions to *SSAP No. 22—Leases*, as illustrated below, to clarify that sale leasebacks with restrictions on access to the cash do not qualify for sale leaseback accounting and must be accounted for by the seller using the financing method.

1. Sale-leaseback accounting shall be used by a seller-lessee only if a sale-leaseback transaction includes all of the following:

a. A normal leaseback is a lessee-lessor relationship that involves active use of the property by the seller-lessee in consideration for payment of rent, including contingent rentals that are based on future operations of the seller-lessee. The phrase active use of the property by the seller-lessee refers to use of the property during the lease term in the seller-lessee’s trade or business, provided that subleasing of the leased property is minor.

b. Admitted assets, if the buyer-lessor is a related party, or either admitted or nonadmitted assets if the buyer-lessor is not a related party. For purposes of this paragraph, related parties include those identified in SSAP No. 25 and entities created for the purpose of buying and leasing nonadmitted assets for the reporting entity and/or its affiliates.

c. A sale where the cash received by the seller has access restrictions does not meet the definition of a sale for sale leaseback accounting and shall be recorded as a financing arrangement as described in paragraph 39.

39. A sale-leaseback transaction that does not qualify for sale-leaseback accounting nor the deposit method shall be accounted for by the financing method. Under this method the seller-lessee shall not derecognize the transferred asset and shall account for any amounts received as a financial liability and the buyer-lessor shall not recognize the transferred asset and shall account for the amounts paid as a receivable. A sale-leaseback transaction where the cash received as part of the sale is subject to access restrictions would not qualify for sales-leaseback accounting and shall be accounted for by the financing method.

**Status:**

On March 24, 2025, the Statutory Accounting Principles (E) Working Group exposed revisions to *SSAP No. 22—Leases* to clarify that sale leasebacks with restrictions on access to the cash from the sales transaction do not qualify for sale leaseback accounting and must be accounted for by the seller using the financing method.

https://naiconline.sharepoint.com/teams/FRSStatutoryAccounting/National Meetings/A. National Meeting Materials/2025/03-24-25 Spring National Meeting/Exposures/25-01 - Lease Clarification.docx