



For Immediate Release

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ESS Insurance Group and NexTier Insurance Services, LLC Announce Merger and Formation of ESS Energy Group

Butler and Kittanning, PA January 12, 2015 – ESS Insurance Group and NexTier Insurance Services, LLC today announced that they have merged their insurance operations, effective January 1, 2015. The combined organization will operate under the name ESS NexTier Insurance Group, LLC. Charles “Chip” Echnoz, a current principal with ESS will be Chief Executive Officer and Rick Putnam, current President and CEO of NexTier Insurance has been named President and Chief Operating Officer of the combined organization. ESS NexTier Insurance will maintain offices in Kittanning, Butler, and Greensburg.

Additionally, ESS NexTier has formed a wholly owned subsidiary to specifically address the unique needs of the energy industry including oil and gas, mining, and power generation operators and service companies. ESS Energy Group’s staff will be fully dedicated to the design, implementation and service of energy insurance programs as well as risk consulting in M&A, contracts, and more. Watson Barker will lead the ESS Energy Group.

“Together, these two organizations have been in business over 75 years, work with more than 30 carriers, and offer insurance products and services to meet just about any insurance need you may have. This means more options and expanded services for our customers,” stated Echnoz. “We have been dedicated to the design, marketing, implementation and service of energy risk management and insurance programs for over 25 years. The introduction of ESS Energy Group further solidifies our commitment to the oil, gas, mining and power generation industries.”

ESS Insurance Group offers a wide spectrum of Property & Casualty, Risk Management and Employee Benefits solutions to businesses and individual clients throughout Pennsylvania and the world. For over 50 years, ESS’ reliable and leading-edge insurance brokerage and consulting services have enabled clients to secure their assets, their workforce, and their bottom line.

For the fifth consecutive year, **NexTier Insurance Services** has retained its elite status as a “Best Practices Agency” as determined by the Independent Insurance Agents & Brokers of America (IIABA). *What sets NexTier apart is service, commitment to customers and unique approaches to loss control and claims handling.* Founded in 1986, NexTier Insurance Services is an affiliate of NexTier Bank.

“Our combined professional staff has decades of industry experience,” said Putnam. “We remain dedicated to customer relationships that foster trust, efficiency and proactive risk management. We have the resources to design, manage and service programs for large businesses, smaller businesses and organizations, and individuals with a wide range of personal insurance needs. This is an exciting time for both NexTier and ESS Insurance.”

ESS NexTier operates 4 locations, two in Kittanning, one in Butler and one in Greensburg. Please feel free to call contact us 1-800-727-6077 or 1-800-256-3080. www.essnextier.com

About ESS Insurance Group

ESS Insurance Group ranks as the 14th largest insurance agency in the Pittsburgh / tri-state area. ESS surpassed \$50,000,000 in annual premium in 2011 and ranked in the top 5% of all agencies located in the United States by leading agency consultant “Marsh-Berry” for agency operations, performance, profitability and general business practices. ESS Insurance Group’s current combined employee insurance experience base is 387 years. Visit www.essinsurance.com

About NexTier Insurance Services NexTier Insurance Services, founded in 1986, is headquartered in Butler, PA. NexTier Insurance Services is a member of the Independent Insurance Agents and Brokers of America and an affiliate of NexTier Bank and has been recognized for five consecutive years as an IIABA “Best Practices” Group. Visit www.nextierinsurance.com

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