

RSS tips & trends

Personal Edition

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The Importance of Insuring the Full Value of Your Home

Unknowingly, some folks may hold homeowners policies that underinsure their residence. How is this possible? The primary reason is that homeowners forget to let their agent know about improvements or additions to a home that increases its value. Some of these home value increasing projects include:

- Upgrading kitchens and baths
- Converting basements to family rooms
- Adding decks, patios or additions

Unfortunately, one may discover only after a sizable claim, that the actual cost of rebuilding or restoring a home to its original condition far exceeds its insured value. That's why it is important for your homeowners policy limits to keep pace with a home's replacement cost. To avoid underinsuring your home, we recommend that customers take two important steps:

- At your earliest convenience, contact one of our customer service representatives and bring them up-to-

date on major home improvements we might be unaware of.

- During future major home improvements, keep us advised of both the timing and cost of the improvements.

Timely communication from you of major improvements in your home will allow us to keep it accurately and fully insured.



Consider the Added Financial Protection of a Personal Umbrella Policy



In today's litigious society, the purchase of an automobile and homeowners policy may not

be enough to protect one from extraordinary loss circumstances. For example, a driving mishap resulting in a fatality or an injury to a guest in your home could trigger a multi-million dollar lawsuit. Liability limits provided by an umbrella policy can add \$1,000,000 (or more) protection on top of your

underlying liability limits to give additional protection. Note that some insurance carriers require minimum underlying limits of liability to prevent gaps in coverage.

We strongly recommend that our customers consider the benefits of purchasing an umbrella policy. A good place to start the assessment process is to take advantage of our local presence and speak with one of our agents or customer service representatives. This can be done in person or by phone. We'll explore your risk profile and then develop the proper liability limits to protect your hard earned financial assets. Call today.

Auto Insurance Check-Up

We recommend to our auto insurance customers that they routinely review the policy and choices they have made for limits and coverages. To assist in that review, we offer a sample list of some (not all) questions to use in the self-test. It will be helpful to have your automobile policy available when going through these questions:

- ✓ Are policy liability limits sufficiently high to protect your assets in the event of a major claim?
- ✓ Are uninsured/underinsured motorist limits adequate if you have an accident with a driver with little or no liability insurance?
- ✓ Did you know that rental reimbursement coverage can be inexpensively added to a policy?
- ✓ Are all vehicles in your household covered by insurance?

- ✓ Do all of these vehicles carry the same liability limits to avoid gaps in coverage?
- ✓ Is the titled vehicle owner(s) listed as a named insured on the automobile policy?
- ✓ Are all licensed drivers in the household listed on the policy?
- ✓ Is there customized equipment in the vehicle?
- ✓ Does the vehicle have electronic equipment not installed by the manufacturer?
- ✓ Are you taking advantage of all available discounts for things like anti-theft devices, low mileage, senior citizen, good student, daytime running lights, side-curtain airbags and anti-lock brakes?

After your review, we stand ready to answer questions or offer the trusted advice you value from one of our licensed professionals. Stop by or give us a call.

Life Insurance And Family Estate Planning

We strongly recommend to all of our personal lines clients to put in place a family estate plan. The importance of such a plan is underscored by the fact that many Americans who die lack a legal will. A legal will is a basic first step in the estate planning process. A family attorney can assist in drafting this important document. The next step in the planning process is to meet the need for life insurance to cover immediate and long-term family financial obligations should a key family member die. Financial obligations can include children's private

school and/or college education, dollars for medical care for children with special needs, nursing home costs for an elderly parent, paying off a mortgage, loss of income from a significant wage earner, etc.

Our agency can serve as an important member of the estate planning team. We offer a wide range of life insurance products to insure that a family's financial needs are protected. Contact us directly for a no obligation quote. We can also work in tandem with both you and your financial advisor.

Safety Tips When Using a Power Generator

Loss of electrical power in a home is an event that can happen in any season of the year. Adverse weather and accidents are the most common causes of outages. With homes today so dependent on electrical power, many of us have opted to purchase a gas-powered generator to provide electrical back-up. Here are a few tips to reduce the risk of injury, property damage and liability from using this appliance:

- ◆ Never use a generator indoors, even in the garage, since carbon monoxide from the exhaust could enter your home
- ◆ Keep fuel handy, but in a safe place
- ◆ Follow the manufacturer's guidelines for proper

grounding, especially in rain or snow

- ◆ Hire a licensed electrician to connect the generator to your home's wiring using a UL approved transfer switch.

Having a licensed electrician install an approved transfer switch should prevent a generator from back-feeding power to utility lines. It may also prevent damage to the generator when electricity is restored.



Personal Insurance Questions & Answers

Q If our home is damaged by lightning, is it covered by our homeowners policy?

A Subject to deductible (if any) and type of policy, in most cases you are insured for damage caused by lightning. This would include damages triggered by a resultant fire.

Distracted Driving Gets National Attention



The worsening safety issues surrounding distracted driving recently got national attention in Washington,

DC. A two-day distracted driving summit was held by the Department of Transportation (DOT) on September 30, 2009. At the meeting, DOT Secretary Ray LaHood announced new research findings by the National Highway Transportation

Safety Administration that nearly 6,000 people died in 2008 in crashes involving a distracted or inattentive driver. More than a half a million people were injured. On any given day in 2008, more than 800,000 vehicles were being driven by someone using a hand-held cell phone. Secretary LaHood stated "Distracted driving is unsafe, irresponsible and in a split second, its consequences can be devastating".

In addition to cell phone use, distracted driving may include eating, adjusting the radio, etc. We strongly recommend that all of our readers eliminate distracted driving habits and follow the laws on distracted driving in every state which they drive.

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