

Insights and Updates

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What can auto medical payments coverage do for you?

The New Jersey Automobile Reparation Reform Act (also known as the no-fault law) ensures that persons injured in an auto accident would receive prompt and sufficient medical treatment and income replacement without the burden of litigation. Prior to the no-fault law, only a fraction of the liability premiums in the state actually reimbursed accident victims for their economic loss, and the average time to collect was 15 months.

The no-fault law provides a generous package of benefits, and finances it with the removal of excessive pain and suffering damages, wasted litigation expenses and redundant benefits payable under other social programs. As a result, persons injured in an auto accident give up some of their rights to sue for noneconomic damages in exchange for guaranteed benefits that are promptly paid regardless of fault. However, if the injury is severe enough to reach a “verbal threshold,” which is a list of six serious injury types, an injured person may then pursue noneconomic damages.

The “suit limitation” option is the default in the New Jersey Standard Automobile Insurance Policy and 90 percent of policyholders make it their choice. However, you can retain your right to sue, but the policy’s premium will be higher. If you purchase the Basic

Automobile Insurance Policy, the “suit limitation” option is your only choice.

Specific limit options for medical-expense benefits must be offered on the coverage selection form that you sign. Your entire family gets the limit you choose for medical-expense benefits. If you do not choose a limit, coverage will default to a limit of \$250,000. However, your aunt visiting from Kansas is not restricted to the limit you chose. She will get a limit of \$250,000, even if you choose a limit of \$15,000. If the injury is catastrophic, everyone gets a limit of \$250,000.

Keep in mind that, while eligible injured persons are guaranteed these medical-expense benefits up to the limit chosen, it may not all be payable as personal injury protection, or PIP, benefits. There could be other sources, such as workers’ compensation, Medicare or military health care, which may contribute with your auto insurance in reaching that limit.

You may choose a health insurer to provide primary medical-expense benefits for an auto accident instead of claiming PIP benefits coverage on the auto policy. When that choice has been made, it also applies to your resident relatives, but not to nonfamily claimants. All of your family members must be covered by a health plan that will respond to auto accidents (not all do), and this coverage

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must be maintained throughout the auto policy term.

Don’t go it alone—call our agency. We’ll be glad to review the various coverages with you.



Bringing the car to college

It's that time of the year when the kids head back to college. This year, your child wants to take his or her vehicle back with him or her. "What could go wrong?" your child asks, as you casually turn on "Animal House" to show the scene when D-Day turns Flounder's car from a vehicle to the "Death Mobile."

Be aware of a couple things when your child takes the car to school. First, no matter who is driving (as long as they have permission), your policy will respond for coverage, and that means there is a chance your premium could increase due to losses.

When notifying your carrier of the new garaging location (school), the underwriters may want to know who your child is living with, and they may want to get those individuals' driving records, since roommates could have access to the vehicle. Depending on their records, this could become a problem.

A new premium for the vehicle could come with a new garaging location. The rates are based partially upon where the vehicle is garaged, so the premium could increase. Will the student be driving more? Is he or she living on or off campus? Is the vehicle garaged or parked on the street? All of these things could affect the premium rate.

So, if your child is heading back to school with the car, call us and we'll be able to make sure he or she is covered properly and you have one less thing to worry about.

Insurance and your home business

The idea of running your business from home has appeal: The commute time is negligible and you can conduct staff meetings in your slippers. But, before you convert your basement into your home office, make sure you've thought about your insurance coverages and that you've called our office. We can review your business requirements and tailor a business insurance policy to fit your needs and the needs of your business.

A traditional homeowners insurance policy may cover only up to \$2,500 for items in the home used in business and \$1,500 for equipment that is not on the premises. A stolen business credit card; a power surge causing the loss of important computer data; and a lawsuit over a business-related matter are not covered under a homeowners insurance policy.

Addressing these concerns may be as simple as adding a home business endorsement to your existing homeowners policy. This endorsement will cover your business property; business liability, including product, personal injury and advertising liability; loss of business income protection; valuable papers coverage; and accounts receivable. However, all businesses are unique. Will you have a company car? Are you running a day care or similar business? Does your business involve specialized, expensive equipment? We can help you examine all your options.

Don't let the appeal of an at-home business be affected negatively by a business-related insurance claim. Call us today and have peace of mind tomorrow.





Cold weather safety for your home and family

Ahh, fall—We love it! Vivid foliage, pumpkin spices, football and cuddling next to the fireplace warms our hearts, but please remember: As the weather gets cooler and you take action to keep your family warm, your family and home face greater jeopardy. The National Fire Prevention Association warns that heating equipment fires are the second-leading cause of fire deaths in American homes in the colder months and it suggests these tips to prevent them:

- Select equipment that bears the mark of an independent testing laboratory.
- Be sure the equipment is installed by a trained professional, in compliance with local fire and building codes.
- Keep all portable heaters (whether powered by electricity or fuel) at least 36 inches from anything that can burn, including furniture, bedding, clothing, pets and people.
- Run space heaters only when you are in the room and awake. And, supervise all children and pets when the heaters are in use.

- If you are using a portable kerosene heater, use only the fuel recommended by the manufacturer. Store the kerosene away from heat or open flame in a container approved by your local fire department, and be sure it's clearly marked with the fuel name.

“Heating equipment fires are the second-leading cause of fire deaths in American homes in the colder months.”

- Have your heating system and chimney inspected (and cleaned, if necessary) prior to the start of every heating season.
- If using a wood stove, follow the manufacturer's recommendations

for installation, use and maintenance.

- When disposing the ashes from your fireplace or wood stove, first make sure all embers are extinguished and discard them away from the home. Your evergreens will love cold ash incorporated into the soil!

Above all, we want you to be safe in your home, and we want to help in the event that the unthinkable happens. Part of being prepared is making sure your homeowners insurance reflects the amount of coverage you would need to replace your home and possessions. Do you have replacement cost coverage? Have you taken a home inventory with photos or a video? Call our agency. We'll be glad to review and explain your coverages to you.



Cleaning up household waste after a storm



Cleaning up your house or building after it has been damaged by a storm is not as simple as it may seem, but there are safety precautions you can observe to ensure the job goes smoothly after the storm. Before you even begin the clean-up process, always remember to properly document any damage so it can be assessed by the adjuster. Here are a few tips to keep in mind when cleaning up after a storm:

1. The type of storm will determine what is to be done to protect chemical spills and leaks. If you're in low-lying areas, where the primary concern is flooding, take hazardous chemicals, such as paints, cleaners, and gasoline, and move them to the upper floors. If you're inland, where the brunt of the storm will be high winds and wind-driven rains, then move the chemicals to lower levels.
2. Take care to ensure all household chemicals are labeled and sorted properly. Mixing household chemicals and cleaners can produce potentially toxic vapors that can

be very dangerous. Household materials, such as bleach and ammonia can mix to become phosgene gas, a colorless deadly gas. Other mixtures, such as gasoline and rubbing alcohol can create explosives.

3. Make sure to dispose of all chemical and household waste properly. Dumping chemicals down the toilet or drains may contaminate the public water supply and could introduce toxic chemicals into marine ecosystems. To avoid potentially dangerous fumes, also make sure to carefully remove chemicals from other waste if you choose to burn debris after a storm. Try instead to dispose of such waste into garbage cans or bags, or use the centers or collection points sometimes made available by the government specifically to handle disposals after a major storm.

Before the storm hits, make sure to call our agency to make sure you have the proper coverage in place.

News from our agency

Fall already? I guess with football on it must be... lol

With the weather changing a few important items should be kept in mind.

1. If you have storm windows, do they work?
2. Did you winterize your equipment?
3. Is your fall equipment ready for use aka tuned up?
4. Has your insurance been reviewed lately?

I know the 4th question wasn't the best, but insurance claims never pick a season to happen in, they can happen at any time. Some of the articles in this newsletter related to injuries or penalties. Having your policy checked or updated is always welcomed in our office and could prevent the claims from happening.

Most people have a wellness exam done on an annual basis, why not do it for your insurance?

As a reminder, we are writing personal lines (Home/Auto/PWC) and life and health insurance.

We are also writing Simple IRA's, 529's, Roth IRA's, and other retirement plans.

Enjoy the upcoming seasons and related holidays, and as always, thank you for your continued business. Keep the referrals coming and have a good one!

*** If you were wondering PWC means personal water craft ***