



Staying in Touch

Tips, strategies, and advice to help you choose the right insurance coverage

Do You Need a Home Inspection?

Buying a home is one of the biggest investments you'll ever make. If you choose wisely, you'll enjoy many years of happiness. Unfortunately, not all homes are in great shape. A home inspection can help you feel more confident about your purchase.

For your peace of mind and financial health, home inspections are recommended for both resale and newly constructed homes. In fact, for older homes, some lenders insist on a home inspection before closing the sale.

What can you expect?

A comprehensive inspection will examine all areas of the structure including the roof, attic, electrical, plumbing and heating systems, appliances, floors, interior and exterior walls, foundations, windows and doors. A professional inspector is trained to interpret crucial clues such as watermarks on walls or ceilings, as well as cracks in ceiling, walls or foundations. At the end, you will receive a detailed analysis of the property's major systems and components and reduce the chances of discovering unexpected and costly defects after moving in.

Choosing an inspector

Always choose an unbiased inspector – someone you can trust to be objective and independent – someone who works only for you and no other interested party. Check association websites, yellow pages, home trade magazines, or ask friends or family members for potential inspectors. Before hiring a home inspector, ask how long they have been in business, what their qualifications are, and whether they can provide at least three references.

Make your purchase with confidence. Be sure to have your home inspected before you close.

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A home inspection is not to be mistaken as a warranty on the house.



Business Interruption Insurance Helps Keep You in Business



Business Interruption Insurance can be as vital to the survival of your business as fire insurance.

Most business owners purchase insurance to protect their property from damage caused by a disaster such as fire. But many owners fail to think about how they would continue their business if a fire or other disaster made their business premises temporarily unusable. Business Interruption Insurance is designed to help in these situations.

Business Interruption Insurance coverage is available in many forms. It is payable if the cause of interruption is covered under your property insurance policy. For example, if a fire forces you to close your business during repairs, Business Interruption Insurance can cover your lost profits and/or earnings, as well as your operating

Personal Lawsuits Are On The Rise! A Personal Umbrella Policy Can Protect You

It is an unfortunate sign of the times that our society is getting more litigious.

Not only are there more lawsuits, the

amounts being sought are getting higher and higher. Today it's not unusual for personal lawsuits to seek damages in the two, three or five million-dollar range.

Your Home and Auto Policies already provide basic liability protection. But what do you do if you are faced with a lawsuit for more than your policy provides? The answer may be a Personal Umbrella Policy.

As long as you have at least \$1 million in home, auto or other personal liability coverage, you are eligible to top up your protection with a Personal Umbrella. Depending on your needs or comfort level, you can increase the limits of your personal insurance policies to \$2 million, \$3 million, or more in an economical way.

Not only can a Personal Umbrella increase liability limits on items such as cottages, watercraft, all terrain vehicles or recreational vehicles, it can also provide coverage beyond that provided by the underlying policies.

This often includes limited coverage for:

- i) Directors and Officers of non-profit organizations including condominium corporations;
- ii) personal injury for claims related to such actions as libel, slander, discrimination and wrongful eviction.

Finally, Personal Umbrellas provide world-wide coverage for personal actions with the exception of automobile coverage, which is restricted to Canada and the United States of America.

As your assets increase, so does your liability exposure. A Personal Umbrella Policy can increase your liability coverage at a reasonable cost and give you peace of mind.

If you want to buy additional protection for yourself and your family, talk to us about Personal Umbrella Insurance.

Sewer Back-Up vs. Water Seepage

Most comprehensive homeowner packages cover loss or damage resulting from the sudden and accidental escape of water unless it is caused by freezing. This includes water from a water main, swimming pool or from a plumbing, heating, sprinkler or domestic appliance located inside or outside your dwelling.

Sewer back-up coverage is not normally included on a homeowner policy, but can usually be added for a nominal fee. This coverage provides protection for loss or damages caused by the rupture, back-up or escape of water from a sewer, sump, drain, storm drain or septic tank. Most sewer back-ups are caused when the amount of water forced into the sewers can't get away from your home fast enough. While we cannot control sewer back-up, sump pumps and proper sewer design and maintenance can help prevent these losses.

On the other hand, homeowner packages will NOT cover loss or damage that is caused by the continuous or repeated

seepage or leakage of water or by ground water or other water below the surface of the ground, unless it is caused by the escape of water from a public water main or swimming pool.

Water seepage is normally due to a build up of ground water. The water can come in through the foundations, walls, basements or other floors, doors, window wells, sidewalks, and driveways.

The condition of your foundation is a housekeeping or maintenance issue, not an insurance issue. If the land around your house slopes in towards your foundation, instead of running away from the home, the chance of ground water building up is greater.

You can help prevent water seepage by ensuring your window wells are clear of leaves and debris and by periodically checking your foundation for signs of wear, tear and cracks.

expenses such as leases and utilities until you're able to reopen your business.

Extra Expense Insurance can be a wise business insurance investment if you have to carry on your business at a temporary location. This coverage reimburses reasonable costs (beyond normal operating expenses) that are required to avoid having to shut down during repairs to your original place of business.

Often a Business Interruption Policy will cover extra expenses that are required to reduce the business interruption costs. This coverage can also be purchased on its own for those business operations not requiring full interruption insurance.

Another type of Business Interruption Insurance is available for businesses that depend on key suppliers or customers.

Contingent Business Interruption Insurance is designed to assist businesses that are interrupted due to a fire or other disaster at a supplier or a major customer.

Since it's essential to get a business up and running as quickly as possible after a disaster, Business Interruption coverage generally starts within 48 to 72 hours of the event.

The cost of Business Interruption Insurance is based primarily on the degree of risk and the cost of getting the business up and running again. Limits of coverage are based on financial records and forecasts of future earnings.

Keep your business running. Call us and we'll help you determine the right type of coverage and limits for your business.

Power Failure Causes Rotten Food. Am I Covered?

You've had a power failure and now have spoiled goods in your fridge or freezer, are you covered?

For most people the answer is yes. Your Homeowner, Condominium or Tenant Policy will likely protect you. Most personal policies include a Food Freezer Extension that covers the loss of perishable goods due to mechanical breakdown including off-premises power interruption. Often there is no deductible for this type of claim, but a \$2,000 policy limit is common. If the power supply in the building containing the freezer is disconnected accidentally or intentionally, you will not be covered.

For commercial policyholders, things get a little more complicated.

Under the Commercial Property Section of most commercial policies, losses caused by mechanical breakdown, power surges, cracking and explosion are excluded. This includes losses resulting from a general power failure.

Alternatively, Boiler and Machinery Insurance offers protection for equipment damaged by accidental breakdown. Although general power failures are not covered, if a power surge causes the breakdown and the subsequent loss of perishable goods, you will be covered subject to the policy wordings and conditions.

If you have Business Interruption coverage, you may be covered depending on the specific perils insured and the policy wordings and conditions.

If you're not sure if you are covered, check with us. Don't wait until after a loss.



Protecting Items in Your Car

Guarding your possessions is important at anytime. People lock their doors and close their blinds when they leave the house, but often become careless when leaving items in their vehicles.

Christmas is a particularly vulnerable time. Unfortunately, there are people who prey on unsuspecting shoppers. Often thieves loiter around malls and parking lots just waiting for their chance to smash and grab. They look for shoppers who put purchases in their cars and then return to the stores for more shopping. They seize this chance to make off with your goods.

The following are some tips to protect your possessions and your peace of mind.

- Lock your vehicle at all times.
- Keep items out of sight and in the trunk.
- Cover up items that can be seen inside (Privacy or tinted glass can help to hide items in the car).
- If you load your car and have more shopping to do, move your car to a different location in the lot.
- Purchases from high value stores (jewelry, electronics) are most desirable, consider re-bagging them if possible.
- Always park in a well-lighted area.

If your vehicle is broken into and items are stolen, you will need to file claims under two separate policies. Your Auto Policy will cover damage to your vehicle, less the applicable deductible. For lost possessions, you'll claim these on your Homeowners or Tenants Policy, often with a second deductible.

Follow these simple precautions and enjoy the holiday season without experiencing the stress of shopping twice.



What Are Special Limits?

Does my Property Insurance Policy cover me for all types of losses regardless of the amount of damage? Unfortunately, the answer is no. All Property Insurance Policies have coverage limits and restrictions that define the maximum amount a policy will pay in the event of a loss.

The most common limitation, and one that is easy to relate to, is a limitation on jewelry. Most Personal Property Policies contain a limit of anywhere from \$2,000 to \$10,000 in total for all jewelry items. However, each and every policy is different and the limits can vary substantially between policies and companies.

Other common items with special limits include: bicycles; collectible coins and cards; money and securities; motorized lawn and garden equipment; trees and shrubs; and watercraft. Remember, every policy is different.

So what do you do if the limit for a specific item on your policy is not enough? Fortunately, you can easily add additional coverage with higher limits to suit your specific needs. We recommend you review your coverage limits at least on an annual basis or whenever your situation changes.

Call us if you have questions or wish to discuss the limitations on your policy.



Ice and Your Safety

Ontario's frozen lakes, ponds and rivers make a wonderful winter playground for many people. From skating to snowmobiling to a simple stroll across the ice, these winter activities are part of our heritage and part of what makes living in this Province great. Unfortunately, deaths occur every year as people fall through the ice. With common sense, a little preparation and some safety equipment, many of these fatalities could have been prevented.

Here's how you can make your outdoor adventures a little safer.

Never assume the ice you are about to venture out on is safe simply because of sub-zero temperatures and snow accumulation. There are many factors that determine the thickness and density of ice, most of which are not visible to the eye. Water depth, fluctuating water levels, currents and rapidly changing weather patterns are just a few factors that dramatically affect ice conditions.

General Safety Tips

- Never go out on the ice alone – always travel with at least one other friend.
- Visually inspect the ice conditions from shore. Look for signs of unsafe conditions such as open water or large pressure cracks.
- Check with the local authorities to see what the ice conditions are like.
- Before venturing onto unknown waterways, make a hole with an auger or an axe reasonably close to shore, to get a clearer picture.
- Always tell someone exactly where you are going and when you expect to be home.

Safety Equipment

- Pack a 50-foot length of rope in case someone in your party falls through. Never run close to the ice edge to pull someone out – use the rope.
- Whenever possible, wear a flotation suit. If you do fall in, this will keep you near the surface and slow the effects of hypothermia.
- Always take a set of picks with you. These are basically two handles with nails in the ends that are attached to

one another with a length of string. They can be purchased at most outdoor stores for approximately \$15 and will make it easier for you get out of the water if you fall in.

Ice Thickness

Remember no ice is 100% safe. However, as a general guideline the minimum ice thickness to support an adult is 4 inches, snowmobiles require 6 inches and cars at least 12 inches. If you're not sure, err on the side of caution and don't go on the ice.

It's amazing how quickly accidents happen. Be aware and be prepared to make your ice adventures safe and enjoyable.



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