



# Staying in Touch

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

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### Ontario Regulations

Regulations allow certain All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) to have greater access to the shoulder and paved portions of some Ontario highways. This change became effective July 31, 2003 and applies only to ATVs with the following characteristics:

- Four wheels, with all tires in contact with the ground;
- Steering handlebars;
- A seat that is designed to be straddled by the driver;
- Designed to carry a driver only (no passengers).

(These regulations do not apply to other types of off-road vehicles.)

Qualified ATVs (as described above) are now permitted to operate on the shoulder of certain highways\* provided they:

1. Travel in the same direction as traffic;
2. Move to the traveled portion of the highway only if the shoulder is impassable/unsafe;
3. Observe a speed limit that is lower than the posted limits (maximum 20 km/h where the posted limit is 50 km/h or less, maximum 50 km/h where the posted limit is over 50 km/h);
4. Do not carry passengers.

### Licence and Registration Requirements

The law requires that all riders wear an approved motorcycle helmet and have a valid G2/M2 or greater driver's licence when operating on a permitted road.

All ATVs must be registered with the Ministry of Transportation and have a valid permit – this includes vehicles that are operated exclusively on your own property.

ATVs can not be registered to anyone under the age of 16.

Persons under 12 years of age are not permitted to drive an ATV except on land occupied by the vehicle owner and while under close supervision of an adult.

In Ontario, ATVs must be insured under an Automobile Policy. Call us to make sure you're covered.

Enforcement personnel have instituted a zero tolerance for those who choose to ride without the necessary documentation. Those riding without a licence or insurance will face stiff penalties and fines.

Visit [www.e-laws.gov.on.ca](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca) and go to Ontario Regulation 316/03 "Operation of Off-Road Vehicles on Highways" for more information.



Your best insurance is an Insurance Broker

\* ATVs are prohibited from all 400 series highways, the Trans Canada Highway and the Queen Elizabeth Way. Other Ontario highways may have limited access and/or restricted areas. Refer to the website [www.e-laws.gov.on.ca](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca) for a full list.



## Understand the Risks Involved with Contracts

Many contracts, from simple lease agreements to complex business transactions, contain clauses or conditions that involve insurance, indemnity and hold harmless requirements. **Failure to comply with these conditions can be detrimental to your financial well-being.**

Some contracts require specific types of insurance coverage or limits. Others specify who has financial interest in a property through a mortgage clause or a lien agreement. While others include clauses that release liability from one party to another. Since there are no standards when it comes to insurance conditions and indemnity clauses in contracts, proper risk management becomes critical whenever they are being reviewed.

As your insurance broker, we have the expertise and the understanding to advise you on these matters. As part of a total review process, we can discuss any contract clauses with you, indicate how you would be affected by them, and let you know what your options are.

## Seven things you should know about mould

Mould is everywhere, indoors and outdoors – and is generally excluded on your homeowner's policy. Depending on where it grows, it can be helpful or harmful. When mould grows inside homes or buildings, it may cause health problems and reduce the value of your home.

Moulds release chemicals and spores that can cause irritation of the eyes, skin, nose, throat, and lungs in some people or trigger asthma attacks in others.

Any building can have mould. However, buildings with a history of roof leaks, leaking pipes, floods, fires and problems with indoor air quality (ex. poor humidity control, lack of fresh air) have the greatest risk for mould growth.

If your home has had a water problem, check for signs of damage including stained surfaces, damaged drywall or musty odours. Even though the water problem may have been fixed, the effects of mould could remain. The general rule is if you can see mould or smell mould, you have to remove it.

For advice on cleaning up mould problems visit the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) website [http://www.cmhc.ca/en/burema/gesein/abhose/abhose\\_ce08.cfm](http://www.cmhc.ca/en/burema/gesein/abhose/abhose_ce08.cfm)

### Basic steps to control mould growth

1. The best way to control indoor mould growth is to control moisture. There is no way to eliminate all mould or spores indoors.
2. Check your home for signs of moisture and moulds. If mould is a problem, eliminate the source of moisture.
3. Reduce indoor humidity (to 30-60%) to decrease mould growth. Vent bathrooms, dryers to the outside; use air conditioners and de-humidifiers; increase ventilation; and use exhaust fans when cooking, dishwashing and cleaning.
4. Prevent condensation by adding insulation to pipes, windows, floors and walls.
5. Clean mould off hard surfaces in bathrooms, showers, laundry areas and kitchens with water and detergent, and dry completely.
6. Reduce the amount of stored materials in your home, especially items that are no longer used. Moulds grow on fabrics, paper, wood and practically anything that collects dust and holds moisture.
7. Do not install carpeting near drinking fountains, sinks, or on concrete floors with leaks or frequent condensation.



## Extreme weather = big damage

### Where would we be without insurance?

Since 1996, Canadians have been hit with three of the most costly natural disasters in Canada's history. First came Quebec's Saguenay River flood, Canada's first billion dollar disaster in 1997. A year later, it was Manitoba's Red River flood, the worst flooding in 150 years with damage topping \$450 million. As if that wasn't enough, in January of 1998 the ice storm of the century hit eastern Ontario, Quebec and Atlantic Canada. This storm affected over 3 million people and resulted in more than \$2.7 billion in losses paid by insurers and governments.

Since then, we've had wildfires, droughts, tornados, hurricanes, snow storms and power outages that have created hardship and losses for many Canadians. In the last two years alone, almost \$500 million in insurance claims can be attributed to extreme weather. Leading the list at \$240+ million are claims from British Columbia's fires, floods and freezes in 2003. Losses from Peterborough's floods last July are expected to top \$100 million, while losses from Hurricane Juan that hit Halifax in 2003 are now more than \$80 million.

It's events like these that remind us that insurance is all about risk sharing. But some of these disasters are not covered by insurance. If in doubt, you should check with us for clarification on what is covered and what is not.



Pay particular attention to the following clauses and conditions whenever they appear in a contract:

- Insurance limits of property and liability (Ex: \$1M liability)
- Insurance conditions (Ex: Carry Broad form coverage on leased property)
- Replacement cost conditions
- Indemnity Clause
- Hold Harmless Agreement
- Insurance proceeds
- Mortgages and lien agreements

These types of contractual conditions can dictate how insurance proceeds are paid if you have a claim. Don't be caught off guard or be misinformed, involve us in your contract review process.

## For boaters

# Where, when and how far can be very important

Did you know there are certain restrictions or warranties with most pleasure watercraft policies? These warranties specifically deal with where you boat (navigational limits), when you boat (lay up periods), and how far you haul your boat (land conveyance).

Navigational limits for pleasure crafts can vary considerably. Some insurers allow you to operate your watercraft anywhere within Canada and the Continental United States, while others limit the use to the Great Lakes, the inland waters of certain Provinces, and some specified waterways within the United States. Make sure you understand any navigational restrictions on your policy before you explore new waters.

Some policies include a lay up or non-use period, usually between December 1st to April 1st each year. Operating your watercraft during these dates can result in denial of coverage

should a loss occur. Make sure you check your policy if you plan on using your watercraft outside the typical season.

Finally, some policies restrict how far you haul your watercraft. Although many insurance companies allow land transportation without mileage restriction within Canada and the Continental United States, others restrict this coverage to a maximum distance from the location where the watercraft is usually laid-up. If you plan on hauling your boat to a distant port, make sure you are covered.

If you have questions about your watercraft policy, call us. Protect your investment and get the facts!

## Save your neck from whiplash – raise your headrest!

Whiplash. Ouch! Even the sound of that word makes many people feel ill. Here's some startling news. In Ontario, only 13 out of 100 drivers have properly adjusted headrests. Are you one of them?

A recent study by the Insurance Bureau of Canada used videotape to observe a total of 7571 drivers and 1090 passengers as they approached intersections or were in stop-and-go traffic. They found that over half (53%) of the drivers observed, had their headrest in such a poor position, it would not protect them at all from an injury in a rear-end collision. The full results of this study can be found at [www.ibc.ca/headrest.asp](http://www.ibc.ca/headrest.asp).

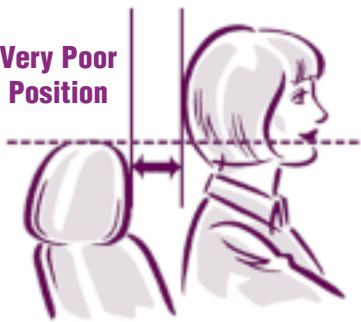
Properly adjusted headrests can dramatically reduce the number and severity of soft tissue injuries if you are involved in a rear-end collision. For safety's sake, adjust your headrest to save your neck.

### How Can I Adjust my Headrest?

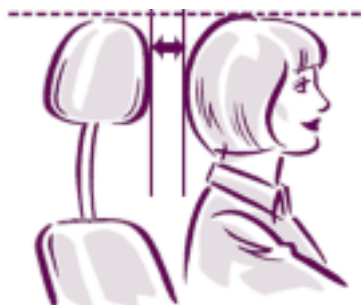
Having your headrest adjusted properly is as easy as **1, 2, 3!**

1. The centre of the headrest should be slightly above the top of the ear;
2. The top of the headrest should be at least as high as the top of the head;
3. Ideally the distance between the headrest and the back of the head should be between 5 and 10 centimeters (2 to 4 inches).


Very Poor Position



Ideal Position



## Home Renovation Facts



Whenever we write a home insurance policy, we ask you a number of questions to assist you in determining the cost to rebuild your dwelling.

If you are planning to make renovations that increase the value of your home, you should let us know so your insurance coverage can keep pace with the improvements.

Not all renovations increase the value of your home. For example, if you replace your 30 year-old windows or kitchen with the same grade and quality as before, this is considered maintenance and does not need to be reported.

However, if you upgrade your windows significantly or replace veneer cabinets and laminate counter tops with solid wood designer cabinets and granite tops, you will have increased your home's value and will need to change your coverage level.

Of course, if your renovation involves major structural changes to your home - such as a room addition, new garage (attached or detached), swimming pool, fireplace, sunroom, or if you complete an unfinished basement - we need to know before you start.

The amount you spend on renovations before your insurance provider requires notification varies depending on your policy. As a rule of thumb, if you spend \$5,000 or more on improvements, you should let us know. If in doubt, call us. Happy renovating!

## Vacation planning and your peace-of-mind

As you make travel plans this summer, don't leave home without packing a little peace-of-mind and take steps to protect your home while you're away.

### Here is a checklist to help give your house "that lived in look"

- Use automatic timers to turn lights on and off in various parts of the house at appropriate times. Consider connecting a radio to a timer.
- Leave blinds open in their usual position.
- Lower the sound of your telephone ringer and answering machine so they can not be heard outside.
- Have mail and packages picked up, forwarded or held by the post office.
- Ask a friend to pick-up "throw-away" newspapers and circulars.
- Stop newspaper deliveries.
- Tell police and neighbours when you plan to be away and when you plan on returning.

- Appoint a person that is competent to check your home regularly while you're away.
- In the summer months, arrange to have someone mow the grass and water the lawn.
- Make sure that windows are secured and shrubs are cut back to allow for easy viewing by neighbours.
- Before leaving on your vacation, check with us to make sure you are abiding by your insurance policy conditions.

### Check Coverages on Your Homeowners or Tenants Policy

Before you leave, take a few minutes to check your homeowners or tenants policy. It will usually provide coverage for off-premises theft. So, for example, if your luggage is stolen, your insurer will pay to replace it, less the deductible.

If you are traveling with expensive electronic equipment, jewellery or sporting gear, it may be more cost-effective to purchase a "floater" or endorsement to your homeowners or tenants policy.

### Check Your Auto Policy Before You Rent a Car

If you plan on renting a car, you need auto insurance. The insurance on your own car, including collision and comprehensive, is not enough. Call us before you go to make sure you are properly covered.

### Consider Buying Travel Insurance

Vacations are often a big-ticket item, so you may want to consider buying some extra peace-of-mind in the way of travel insurance.

Now sit back, relax and enjoy your time away knowing that you have done all you can to make sure your home is looked after.



If you have any questions, please call.



We're proud to be Members of the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario