

STAYINGinTouch

Tips, strategies, and advice to help you choose the right insurance coverage from your Insurance Shopper

PEACE OF MIND INSURANCE

Who needs a Personal Umbrella?

Are you considering a pool or thinking of buying a home with a pool? If so, please read on.

A swimming pool can be a wonderful escape from the summer's heat. To fully enjoy your pool, make sure you have the right insurance protection.

Whether your swimming pool is in-ground or above ground, you will likely need more liability coverage than your homeowner's policy provides.

Even if you monitor your swimming pool 24/7, accidents can happen within seconds. Most pool accidents occur when diving or when running on slippery surfaces around the pool.

If someone gets hurt around your pool, you could face lawsuits and serious financial hardship if you are not properly insured.

Boosting your liability coverage is a good first step. We can increase your existing home policy limits, or add a **Personal Umbrella Liability policy** to protect your assets from potentially high court awards.

The following safety recommendations can help protect you and your guests.

- Make sure your pool meets all local safety standards and building codes related to fencing, locks, decks, and pool safety equipment.

- When not in use, keep your swimming pool covered. Make sure other access points to the pool, such as patio doors, are locked.
- Keep toys that may entice children away from the pool.
- Never leave furniture near the fence that would allow a child to climb over the fence.
- Always have an adult supervising children in and around the pool. Never leave a child unattended around water.
- Take a course on pool safety, first aid and lifesaving skills such as CPR.
- Keep a list of emergency phone numbers at the phone closest to the pool.
- Always keep basic lifesaving equipment such as a reaching pole and ring buoy attached to a rope by the pool and know how to use them.
- Store pool chemicals out of reach and sight of children.

- And, anyone who travels outside of Canada should have one.

This can be important coverage if you accidentally injure someone or damage their property.

As stated above, lawsuits are growing trends. Not only are there more of them, but also the amounts being sought are getting higher and higher. Many people assume their auto or home insurance will provide all the liability protection they need, but that's not necessarily true. If you are faced with a lawsuit that exceeds what these policies provide, a Personal Umbrella policy can provide the extra protection you need.

Personal Umbrella liability insurance can also protect you against risks not covered under your auto or home policies such as libel, slander, defamation of character, false arrest and wrongful conviction.

The more you own, the more exposure you have for a claim against you for injury to others and damage to their property.

This important coverage is available at a very moderate cost. That's why we recommend **everyone** have a Personal Umbrella liability policy. Call us to get started.

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Cell Phones and Technology Gadgets - *Smart Drivers Just Drive!*

**When driving a vehicle, road safety is your first responsibility!
It is important to focus on driving and reduce driver distractions.**

Driver distraction is a major cause of collisions

Using either a hand-held or hands-free cell phone while driving makes it four times more likely that you will be involved in a collision. In fact, using a cell phone affects what a driver sees, reduces reaction time and changes the way drivers react — especially in heavy traffic. Driving for work and using a phone? Motor vehicle collisions are the greatest single cause of traumatic workplace deaths in Ontario.

Remember, smart drivers just drive! In three seconds, driving 60 kilometres per hour equals fifty metres — that's the distance across half a football field. A momentary distraction can result in death or serious injury.

The following are some tips to help reduce driver distraction:

- Plan for safe locations to stop (for example, rest stops or commuter lots) to make and receive calls
- Before you start driving, turn off your cellular phone.
- Allow calls to go to voice mail or allow a passenger to make and receive calls.

- Consider recording an outgoing voice message that lets callers know you are on the road.

In Emergencies:

Having a cellular phone in your vehicle can be an important safety aid for drivers and passengers — whether for personal safety or for reporting a crime or a collision. If you must use your cell phone in an emergency — a situation that could result in a danger to your safety or the safety of others if it is not corrected without delay — consider the following tips:

- Pull over safely if conditions permit.
- Keep emergency calls as brief as possible.
- Alert the caller that you are on the road.
- End conversations immediately if driving conditions or situations become hazardous (for example, inclement weather, roadway construction, high-speed or high-volume traffic).

Remember, focus on the task of driving, with your hands on the wheel and eyes on the road. Reduce the distractions that may cause you to overreact or respond too slowly to a situation.

Do you use your Vehicle for Business Use?

Most insurance companies classify vehicle use into one of three categories – commuting to work or transit, commercial use or pleasure and errands only.

While these categories accurately describe the driving behaviour for most people, some drivers who use their vehicle for business purposes have faced a dilemma. Do they report they only use their vehicles to commute to work, or do they acknowledge they use their vehicles for commercial purposes and face higher premiums? The answer is “yes”, you must disclose the proper usage of your vehicle in order to be properly insured, but make sure you are clear as to the extent you use your vehicle for business.

If you drive your vehicle to work, but also use it to visit clients for limited business, you may need **Incidental Business Use Rating** and for a small increase in premium, you won't have to worry about having any problems at the time of claim. Imagine the hardship of finding out you are unable to collect after an accident, especially after faithfully paying your insurance premiums because you failed to disclose the actual use of the vehicle. Don't be caught in a situation like this! If in doubt, talk to us about your vehicle usage and see if you need **Incidental Business Use!**

Commercial vehicle insurance isn't just for big trucks

If you work as a plumber, painter, carpenter or as some other type of contractor, you may need to be rated for Commercial Use instead of commute to work. Whether you are self-employed or work for a larger company doing this type of work, your insurance company could deny any claim if you failed to disclose the Commercial Use of your vehicle.

Other uses that may require a commercial vehicle policy include real estate sales, fast food delivery, catering and landscaping or snowplowing services to name a few.

It is important that we know how you use your vehicle so we can recommend the best coverage to suit your needs. If in doubt call us – we are “On Your Side.”

Home Renovations – Make sure you're protected from risks

For many of us, our home is our most valuable asset. Before starting any renovation, talk to us, and we'll make sure you are protected against financial loss should an accident or an injury take place during the project.

Even though your house is adequately insured, your risks change once your home becomes a construction site.

When a contractor works on your home, you need to be protected from a number of risks. Insist that the contractor provide you with proof of Business Liability Insurance, also known as general commercial liability

insurance. \$2 million is the minimum that should be requested. This protects you if your home is damaged through the contractor's fault, or if your contractor causes damage or injury to third parties, like your neighbours. We are happy to review your contractor's policy to make certain there are no gaps between it and your policy that could leave you financially vulnerable.

If your contractor needs to hire additional trades such as an electrician or plumber, make sure they are insured for the work they perform. ➔

Are your tires ticking time bombs?

Most people never give a second thought to the age of their tires. Of course you check to make sure they have plenty of tread, no bald spots or unusual wear and tear, but if they are six or more years old, they could break apart.

Recent tests performed by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) found that after a tire reaches six years of age, the chances of catastrophic tread separation increase substantially. In the United States, more than 100 deaths have been attributed to old tires.

Tires, like any other rubber product, have a limited service life regardless of tread depth and use. The rubber in the tires dries out over time. This can lead to cracking, increased stress on the tire's infrastructure and possible sudden and violent failure as the tread separates from the tire. As you can imagine, this can be disastrous - even deadly.

Heat and oxygen are a tire's greatest enemy. Over time, they can cause the bond between the internal layers of the tire to break down. Environmental factors such as sunlight exposure and coastal climates, as well as poor storage and infrequent use of your vehicle can accelerate tire age.

What can you do?

Whether you're riding on new tires or have tires that are several years old, you should check the actual age of your tires. Fortunately, this isn't hard to do if you know where to look and how to translate the Tire Identification Number that identifies the week and year the tire was produced.

Tires Manufactured Since 2000

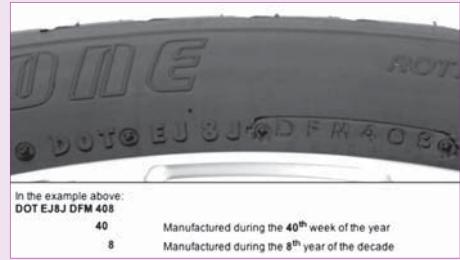
Every tire manufactured since 2000 has a code stamped on it. The last 4 digits show the week and year of manufacture.



For example, LMLR5107 means the tire was manufactured in the 51st week of the year 2007.

Tires Manufactured Before 2000

For tires manufactured before 2000, the last three digits of the Tire ID show the week and year the tire was produced.



For example, DFM408 means the tire was manufactured in the 40th week of the 8th decade.

So, you have old tires. What next?

Even though a tire may look fine on the outside, internally it could be falling apart. If your tires are more than six years old, they may be unsafe and should be replaced. Check your spare too. It may look brand new, but if it's more than six years old, it could pose a significant safety risk. For the safety of you and your passengers, don't ride on ticking time bombs.

Can your business survive crime?

Crime losses are a major contributor to business failure.

Whether it's robbery, burglary, theft of money and securities, computer fraud, or employee dishonesty, we can tailor crime insurance coverage to meet your specific needs.

Crime insurance is actually a collection of insurance agreements that relate to the taking

of money, securities and other property from a business or organization.

It's a fact. Canadian employees steal approximately 20 billion dollars per year in money, securities, stock and other property.

One crime policy known as Comprehensive Dishonesty, Disappearance and Destruction Policy (3D), contains five insuring agreements that can be purchased individually, as a group, or in any combination.

These agreements are typically divided between losses that take place "inside" the business premises and losses that occur "outside" the business premises and can include employee dishonesty, forgery, theft, robbery and holdup, burglary and fraud, as well as a host of other crimes.

If your business or organization has employees and/or handles cash, securities or other property, you likely need crime insurance.

Call us to learn how we can protect your business from fraud, theft, forgery and more. We'll take the time to understand your business needs and make sure you get insurance that fits.

Your contractor should have Workers' Compensation coverage for all the people on the job. If they don't, you could be at risk if a worker is injured on your project.

Don't just take the contractor's word — ask to see a certificate.

If you do the work yourself or plan on acting as your own general contractor and hire others to do the work, talk to us to make sure you are properly protected against damage or injuries suffered as a result of your project.

While most repair or renovation work will not require changes to your homeowner's policy, there are some coverage restrictions you should be aware of. If building materials stored on your property are stolen, they are not usually covered. In addition, if the building is under construction there may be no coverage for vandalism or malicious acts. Water damage is also restricted, especially if it is during the usual heating season. If your property is going to be vacant during the renovation, let us know so that your coverage does not lapse. Remember, tell us about your renovation plans before the work starts. We'll help protect your most valuable asset.

All it takes is one spark...

Nothing beats roasted marshmallows and scary ghost stories around a crackling fire on a warm summer evening. But with this camping tradition, comes the need for increased safety. Keep these points in mind to minimize campfire dangers.

- Never build a campfire on a windy day. Sparks and embers can travel quite a distance and could set an unintentional fire.
- Learn how to safely start a fire without the use of flammable liquids including gasoline, diesel fuel, and lighter fluid.
- Always use a fire pit or build a circle of rocks around

your fire to keep it from spreading. Most provincial parks provide a metal fire pit on each campsite.

- Don't make your fire too big and keep a 6-10 foot clearance around it.
- Do not start a fire under low hanging branches. If you are permitted to, trim the branches around the fire before lighting.
- Don't keep spare firewood too close to the fire - make sure it is upwind and far enough away so sparks don't fly into it.
- Keep children and pets away from the fire and never leave them unsupervised. Teach children how to stop,

drop and roll if their clothing catches on fire.

- Make sure your camping gear is set up far enough away from the campfire.
- Always make sure you can put out your fire if it gets out of hand. Keep water, a shovel or a fire extinguisher nearby. Finally, make sure your fire is completely out before retiring.

All it takes is one spark for things to go wrong. An abandoned campfire or one built without safe clearance can turn a small fire into a dangerous and fast-moving blaze. Be fire smart and stay safe.

Drinking and Driving Laws Just Got Tougher

Approximately 16,000 people are convicted of driving with a blood-alcohol level above the legal limit in Ontario each year. That's almost two people every hour!

Changes to Ontario's Highway Traffic Act in 2008 means you could now face a three-day suspension (for your first offence) if you operate a motor vehicle with a blood alcohol level of .05 to 0.8 or more. In the past, it was a 12-hour suspension. If you are caught a second time, your license may be suspended for seven days, and you will be required to undergo a remedial measures course.

From an insurance perspective, any suspension is now recorded on your driving record. After the first offence, you could face significantly higher insurance premiums. While your license is suspended, you are uninsurable.

About one quarter of all Ontario collisions with fatalities involve drinking drivers. Drinking and driving hurts us all - through deaths, injuries and personal tragedies, in addition to costs for health care, emergency response and property damage. Please don't drink and drive.

Did you know?

In Ontario, the legal limit for blood-alcohol is .08 milligrams per 100 milliliters of blood.

Keep our roads safe for all motorists

If you host an event or party where alcohol is served, you have a legal responsibility to ensure your guests do not drive after drinking. If your event requires a liquor permit, your liability exposure is greatly increased. The line between host liability and liquor legal liability can be fuzzy. Talk to us about insurance options that can reduce your liquor liability exposure.

Attention party or event hosts. Here are some tips to reduce your liquor liability exposure:

- Hire a licensed and insured vendor to serve the alcohol.
- Serve drinks rather than having a self-service bar
- Serve food, as adequate amounts of food slow down the effects of alcohol
- Offer plenty of non-alcoholic drinks
- Hold the event early in the day to discourage excessive drinking
- Provide a taxi or alternative form of transportation for guests who have imbibed.

Contact Us:

