



## Consumers Can Minimize Homeowners Insurance Rate Increases

A survey by the Independent Insurance Agents & Brokers of America found that nearly 3 million households have lost their homeowners coverage since 2003. Despite the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, most homeowners have done nothing to structurally reinforce their home to protect against a natural disaster.

This survey is a follow up to a study conducted in 2003 for the same groups. The number of people losing coverage represents an increase of 500,000 households since 2003 when respondents were asked if they lost homeowners coverage in the past two years. Two-thirds of the households that lost coverage are located in the South.

There are ways consumers can reduce the possibility of facing non-renewal or premium increases from their homeowners insurance company. We offer these tips for homeowners concerned about their coverage.

- **Monitor your claim activity.** Be thoughtful and consult our agency when filing claims. Insurance companies track how many and what type of claims you file. Frequent claims can impact your renewal and rate.
- **Stick with one insurance company** and that company may be more likely to stick with you. An insurance company is more inclined to look past an item on your claims record if you are a long-term customer.
- **Bundle your home with other coverages.** Keeping your homeowners and auto policies with one company makes you a more attractive customer. An insurance company may think twice about dropping your home coverage if it may mean losing your auto business too.

Further strengthen that bond with a personal umbrella policy—coverage that protects you from potentially catastrophic liability claims and lawsuits. Furthermore, maintaining multiple policies with one company often can lead to significant discounts.

- **Review your deductibles.** Carefully review the deductibles for losses under your policy and be sure that you know if a separate deductible applies for losses due to windstorm or other specified perils. Also, make sure that your deductible isn't so small that you will be submitting every potential claim for payment, nor so large that it will cause you financial hardship in the event of a loss. Remember that a large deductible can mean premium savings for you.
- **Home improvements help.** Your home's wiring, plumbing, heating and roofing should be in good repair at all times.
- **Buyer beware.** If you are shopping for a new home, learn about the house's claim history before you buy. Insurance companies will be wary of a home with previous multiple structural or water-damage claims. It can work against you, even if you were not the owner of the home at the time.

Working closely with our agency may be the easiest way to stay insured affordably. We are your advocate when you have a claim or other problem. Our agents have relationships with many different companies and can shop around for the coverage you want.

## Are You Covered For Water Damage Claims???

There's bad news for property owners who think their homeowners insurance will cover soggy basements, the Wisconsin State Journal reported. In general, rain water that seeps into your basement is not covered by homeowners insurance. Many companies offer add-on coverage for backup of sewer and sump pump overflow, but not for water seeping through the foundation. Many flood claims come from areas that are considered to be low-to-moderate-risk zones.

A large percentage of U.S. homeowners mistakenly believe that standard homeowners insurance protects them from a wide array of perils, according to new research by the National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC). In fact, typical property and liability policies don't cover home damage from floods, earthquakes, water line breaks, termites, mold and several other perils, large and small.

The NAIC survey found that 33 percent of U.S. heads of household, who own a home and have homeowners insurance, incorrectly believe flood damages would be covered by a standard homeowners or property and liability policy, despite extensive media coverage of Hurricane Katrina victims whose claims were denied because they lacked flood insurance.

## What This Symbol Means To You ...



There is a difference in where you buy your insurance. Many don't realize there are three sources for insurance:

1. Captive Agents—who can sell you the insurance of only one company.
2. Telephone & Internet Representatives—who can offer you the insurance of one company only on the telephone or via computer.
3. Independent Insurance Agents, like us—who represent many insurance companies. We research these firms to find you the best combination of price, coverage and service for all of your insurance needs.

## State Roads Deadly For Teens

Wisconsin is the fourth-deadliest state in the nation for traffic fatalities caused by drivers age 20 and younger, according to a report issued by two physician-led groups in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel.

The annual list of deadliest states for fatalities caused by young drivers is published by the groups End Needless Death on our Roadways and the Eastern Association for the Surgery of Trauma.

The list is based on 2005 data, the most recent available.

That year, 19.5 percent of Wisconsin traffic fatalities involved drivers ages 16 to 20, up from 18.6

percent in 2004, when Wisconsin was ranked 37th in the nation.

Only 6 percent of Wisconsin's driving population is 16 to 20 years old, but they caused nearly 20 percent of all fatal car crashes.

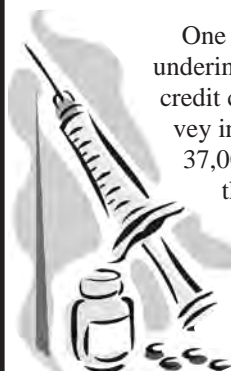
### New Licensing Law Helps

Since implementing the Graduated Driver Licensing Law in 2000, Wisconsin has seen a decrease in the percentage of fatal and non-fatal crashes with teen drivers, the Journal Sentinel said.

The law requires young drivers to have an additional 30 hours of practice behind the wheel, with at least 10 of those at night, and to hold an instructional permit for at least six months before applying for a probationary license.

With a probationary driver's license, young drivers are not allowed to drive between midnight and 5 a.m. except for school or work, and can take only one passenger in the car, other than a family member, for the first nine months. These restrictions are then lifted for drivers who are conviction-free or who turn 18.

## Health Insurance Doesn't Guarantee Protection



One in four Americans with health insurance is still underinsured, meaning they often use up savings or turn to credit cards to cover medical expenses, according to a survey in Consumer Reports. And overall, the survey of 37,000 people found, 40 percent of Americans between the ages of 18 and 64 have inadequate access to health care. According to the report, 49 percent of all those surveyed and 43 percent of those with insurance said they were "somewhat" to "completely" unprepared for a costly emergency.