

Insights and Updates

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Rise above the water

Homeowners who suffered damage or lost property after the storms this past season face major decisions that will affect their insurance premiums and other costs. Some homeowners still are considering whether they should repair, rebuild or relocate all together. If this is the case for you, we encourage you to consider these suggestions by the National Flood Insurance Program:

- The risk you faced in the last storm might not be the same risk you face today or in the future.
- By rebuilding higher, you can reduce, or perhaps even avoid, future flood loss and reduce future financial impact.
- The financial consequences of not having flood insurance coverage could be devastating if another flood occurs.

Raising your home can reduce your risk and your premiums. A primary way to reduce or avoid future flood losses is to raise your building above the Base Flood Elevation. Doing so could reduce your flood insurance premium by 85 percent or more (and save thousands of dollars over the life of your home or business). According to Federal Emergency Management Agency, , Under the Flood Insurance Reform Act of 2012, you could save more than \$90,000 over 10 years if you build 3 feet above Base Flood Elevation*

Whatever you decide to do, make sure you consult our agency and local government officials first. Flood zones and FEMA building requirements have changed. If you rebuild to pre-flood conditions, your flood insurance premium could increase dramatically. Changes to the NFIP and local ordinances can have huge impact on your wallet.

If you are renovating, make sure you call us to discuss these issues:

- how elevating your home or business can help reduce your rates;
- future premium increases for all homes and businesses;
- options for insuring your building and its contents;
- changes in rates for secondary homes; and
- other circumstances that could increase your rates.

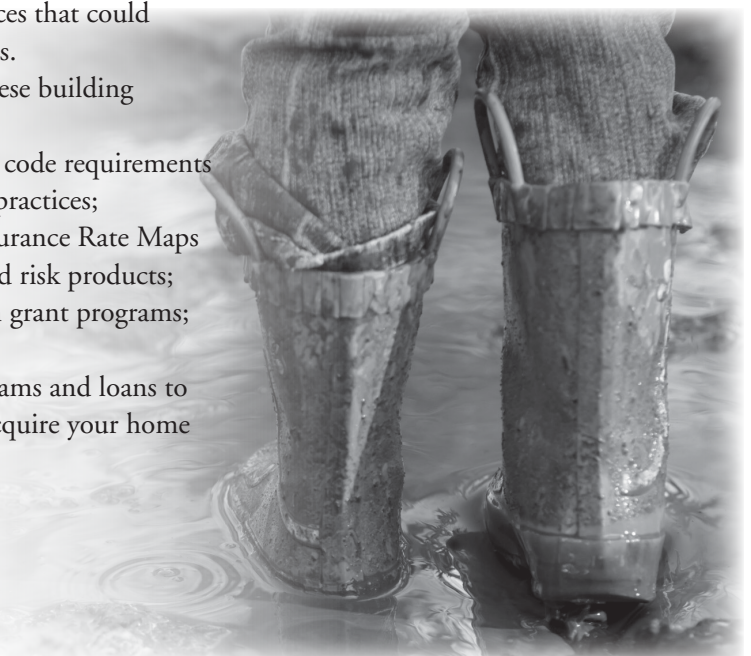
And don't forget these building considerations:

- meeting building code requirements and current best practices;
- revised Flood Insurance Rate Maps and advisory flood risk products;
- hazard mitigation grant programs; and
- other grant programs and loans to help rebuild or acquire your home or business.

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**\$250,000 building coverage only (does not include contents), AE (high to moderate risk) zone, single-family, one-story structure without a basement at: 4 feet below Base Flood Elevation; at BFE; and at three feet above BFE. (Rating per FEMA flood insurance manual, Oct. 1, 2012). Based on a standard National Flood Insurance Program deductible.*



Recreational vehicles have special needs

Did you know neither recreational vehicles nor off-road vehicles are insured under normal car insurance?

An RV can function as a vehicle and home at the same time. Therefore, when you hit the road with your large motor home, you need vehicle insurance for your protection.

But, how about the smaller types of recreational vehicles? Should they be insured too?

Snowmobiles; all-terrain vehicles; fifth-wheel motor homes; personal watercraft; and boats all should be covered by insurance. Accidents can happen anytime, anywhere, and insurance can protect you. Also, there is specialty insurance coverage for ATVs, dirt bikes and dune buggies.

Are you aware that golf carts should have insurance, too? Certain communities use golf carts to get from one place to another. The homeowners policy you have might not cover all of medical expenses or costs to repair damaged property if you get into an accident while using your off-road vehicle.

Not all auto insurance companies will offer policies that include recreational vehicles or off-road vehicles. There are specific companies that sell insurance for either, so ask your professional, independent insurance agent; we will shop around to get you the best coverage at the best price.

Keep your home safe while you're away

Vacations are a time to relax, eat too much and have a great time with your family and friends. It's not the time to worry about your home. There are some things you can do to give yourself peace of mind while you're away.

First, review your homeowners insurance policy to make sure any "big-ticket" items you may have purchased since you bought your policy are covered for theft and other losses. Second, make a record of all the serial numbers of your electronic devices and take photographs. This will aid the police and your insurance company if your property is stolen. Finally, do you have a professionally installed burglar alarm system? An alarm system may make a burglar think twice about breaking into your home, and many insurance companies offer a discount on homeowners policies if your home is equipped with an alarm.

Other helpful tips to keep your home safe while you're gone include: maintaining the shrubs in your yard so

they are less than 3 feet high in the front and sides of your home; securing all your doors with deadbolt locks; setting a few lights in your home on timers (make sure they are set to go on and off at different times); and positioning your valuable possessions (e.g.: televisions, stereos, etc.) so they cannot be seen when a person looks in the window. You also should suspend the delivery of your mail and newspapers (or have a trusted neighbor collect them for you), and contact your local law enforcement agency to see if there is a "vacation-home check" program—so a police officer will check on your home while you are out of town.

Should you have any questions about your homeowners insurance policy before you go on vacation, give us a call. We are happy to answer your questions. Your vacation is a time for relaxing and forgetting about the stresses of everyday life. However, should you become the victim of theft, contact us as soon as possible.





Road trip! Map, snacks, insurance?

Now that the nice weather is finally here, many folks will pile in their cars and hit the road to vacation at the beach, in the mountains, amusement parks, with friends in other cities and states ... you name it. Before you gas up and go, though, here are some tips that could save you some major headaches should your trip take an unexpected detour.

Proof of insurance. Everybody carries their license and registration in their car (or at least, they should!), but do you also have proof of insurance? Your road trip might take you through a state that requires motorists to carry it. Make sure you have it handy in the event you get pulled over or go through a checkpoint.

Roadside assistance. Should you incur a flat tire or other mechanical troubles on your journey, you might require roadside assistance. Some car dealers include this as a complimentary perk after your purchase. It's usually only for a limited time, though, so check its status if you were a recipient.

You can buy roadside assistance coverage on your own through companies like AAA, but you should know it also can be added to some auto insurance policies, often for less money.

“You might need to review more than your auto policy to ensure your protection.”

Belongings. It's helpful to know coverage is available for your belongings inside the car if they are stolen or damaged during your trip, but it's usually through homeowners or renters insurance, as opposed to auto insurance, which only covers the vehicle itself. You might need to review more

than your auto policy to ensure your protection.

Other drivers. When traveling in a group, many people take turns driving. Your auto policy still covers damage when someone else is behind the wheel, but there's more to consider: If the amount of damage exceeds your deductible, the insurance of the person driving might be applicable as secondary or supplementary insurance to cover the remaining cost. If your driver doesn't have insurance, you may be stuck covering the excess yourself. So, choose wisely when passing off driving duties.

Contact us. There are other ins and outs to consider when hitting the open road. If you're planning a trip, give us a call and we'll make sure you're prepared.



Whiz, bang, wow ... ow!



It's true that nothing says Fourth of July quite like colorful explosions in the sky. Yet the smart amateur pyrotechnician is mindful of state laws and consults his or her independent insurance agent before a single sparkler sparkles. Remember, all fireworks are illegal for personal use in New York state. Your best bet is to celebrate July 4 with fireworks is to attend an officially licensed public display. Insurance usually doesn't cover damage resulting from illegal acts.

First of all, fireworks are dangerous:

- According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, approximately 8,600 Americans were injured by fireworks in 2010, with 65 percent of those injuries occurring during the month surrounding July 4.
- According to the National Fire Protection Association in 2010 there was \$36 million in direct property damage.

Nevertheless, fireworks damage can be covered by your homeowners policy, but

you need to be aware of what insurance will and won't cover:

- Accidentally injuring your neighbor. Your homeowners policy probably will pay for medical expenses within your no-fault limits—typically \$1,000 to \$5,000.
- Accidentally damaging your neighbor's house. Your homeowners coverage will probably pay for your legal defense.
- Your neighbor is injured helping you set off fireworks. Again, your homeowners policy probably will pay for medical expenses within your no-fault limits.
- You are injured setting off fireworks. Homeowners coverage won't help you; you'll need health insurance to cover your costs.

As always, you should talk specifics with us, your professional, independent insurance agent. We know you; we know your policy; and we're always here to help.

News from our agency

Don't just renew—review

When you get a policy renewal notice in the mail it's tempting just to sign off and mail it back to the agency. No one likes spending time parsing the details of an insurance contract, after all; and you might figure the policy is probably fine the way it is—just like last year's. However, we urge you to take the time to give it a look-through. Maybe the carrier has changed coverages and is informing you, maybe you bought a new musical instrument, a piece of jewelry, or maybe your teenager is starting to learn how to drive. There are many little life changes that can occur over a year, or even six months, that can create new liabilities or render costly existing coverages unnecessary.

Don't just renew—review. Better yet, review it with us. We can ask the questions and explain the details of what you are and aren't covered for. We're here to help you.

