

Straight Talk About Homeowners Insurance

How to get the best value for your dollar

Buying insurance can be confusing. Price is important, of course, but you should make sure you get the right coverage for your needs.

The quality of service you should expect from your agent and insurance company is also important. Shop carefully to get the best value for your insurance dollar.

Your Professional Insurance Agent will provide a valuable service by analyzing your insurance needs and offering policies from several insurance companies to find the best blend of coverage, price and service.

Why Buy Homeowners Insurance?

Your homeowners policy is a safety net that protects your home and furniture -- your assets. It follows you up the street and around the world. You're covered at your neighbor's home or in a foreign land.

This brochure can help you choose insurance that best protects your home and belongings. You'll also find ways to save money and shop for the best coverage. Know your choices.

How Much Insurance Do You Need?

Skimping on coverage can leave you dangerously unprotected. This can cost money and create headaches when your claim is on the line. Your Professional Insurance Agent can help you decide how much coverage you need.

Shop For Value

To find the homeowners coverage that meets your unique needs, shop smart and ask questions. Have your Professional Insurance Agent shop from at least three companies, so you get the best value for your dollar.

Policy, Price and Service

You should be looking for good value, and that means quality coverage, fair prices and caring service.

If your roof collapses, your furniture is stolen or your dog bites your neighbor, you want a policy that protects you, a company that pays your claim promptly and an agent who is on your side.

Find out:

FYI:



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How much insurance do you get for the price? What kinds?

Does the company offer discounts? Does it pay claims promptly and fully?

In examining coverage, find out if the policy covers your home, furniture, jewelry or special collections, separate structures, losses away from home and injuries caused by your pets.

Floods, except under certain circumstances, and earthquakes are not covered, but special insurance may be purchased for these risks.

Your premium is based on such factors as the type of coverage you select, the amount of your deductible and the size, construction, location and replacement cost of your home.

You should expect good service from the agent and the agency. Make sure the agent will explain what you're buying in plain language. Ask who will handle your account. Find out:

Does the agent want to know your total insurance needs or just sell you a policy?

Do the agent and staff seem courteous and want to help?

Is the agent licensed? Is his or her reputation good? Call your state insurance department. Also determine whether you will deal with the agency or the insurance company when you make a change on your policy or file a claim.

Problems and Questions

Your Professional Insurance Agent is ready and willing to solve your problems and answer your questions about your policy, claims and your company.

Know what your policy covers. Ask your agent to explain any parts which are unclear.

Advice That Pays Off

Keep records. You can maximize your claim if you have an accurate record of your belongings. Make a home inventory that lists all possessions room by room, noting their cost and when and where they were purchased. Color photos or videotape records are helpful. Have expensive items such as jewelry and art appraised by a qualified appraiser.

Ask your Professional Insurance Agent to help you prepare your home inventory. Then, store it in your office, a bank safe-deposit box or a fireproof safe, and keep it current.

Consider updating your inventory after the December holidays. This way, you can record holiday gifts.

Update your policy. Call your agent to update your policy at least one month before renewal.

Discuss any changes that could affect the kind and amount of coverage you need, such as building an addition to the house, buying new furniture or acquiring jewelry or artwork.

Selecting Insurance Coverage

Read your policy carefully. Discuss it with your agent. A standard homeowners policy covers:

Your home and most other structures on your property such as a tool shed.

Furniture and other belongings in your home if they are damaged or stolen.

Lodging, food and other expenses above normal living costs if a disaster forces you from your home.

Trees, shrubbery and plants. You're covered against theft and fire and vandalism.

Losses away from home. You're covered if, for example, thieves steal your suitcase from your car or hotel room.

Harm to others. You're protected if you, family members or pets injure someone else or damage someone else's belongings, on your property or anywhere else.

Not all perils are covered; some are not covered totally. Check with your agent. You may need extra insurance for:

Replacing your home and belongings. Some parts of your home such as the roof, plus furniture and appliances, devalue with age.

A standard policy covers only the lower value. Replacement coverage pays the higher cost of buying a new home or replacing belongings. In the long run, it's a good value.

Jewelry, antiques, furs, and other valuables.

Certain specific perils, such as earthquakes and floods.

Increased costs of construction to comply with more stringent building codes.

Making A Deal

Most insurance companies offer discounts. Ask your agent what discounts your company offers and whether you are eligible. Here are some ways to save money:

Higher is Lower. Reduce your premium by raising your deductible.

Piggybacking Policies. You can usually save money by buying your auto and homeowners policies from the same company.

Security Devices. Install a burglar alarm. Your discount will increase if the alarm rings at the police station.

Fire Protection. Use smoke detectors, build your home with fire-resistant materials, install a sprinkler system and buy fire extinguishers.

Don't Smoke! Some companies give discounts for non-smoking households.

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