



**INTERWEST**  
INSURANCE SERVICES, LLC

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## NEWSBLAST

### Wildfire Threat

# Homeowners Reel as Insurance Becomes Scarcer

**M**ORE AND more residents of smaller towns and cities in California are facing a stark reality of having their insurer non-renew their homeowner's insurance policy, only to find few if any other carriers willing to step up to take on the risk.

The reason, of course, is the increasing threat of wildfires, which caused an estimated \$45 billion in damage alone in 2021.

As a result of these mounting and unsustainable losses, many insurers are either pulling out of the market; limiting the areas where they will cover homeowners, or raising rates and requiring that homeowners shore up their property wildfire resiliency.

If you are a homeowner in California, here's what you need to know:

### Cancellation moratoriums

Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara has invoked insurance policy cancellation or non-renewal moratoriums for homeowners in areas hit by wildfires. On Sept. 26 he announced moratoriums in wildfire perimeters or in wildfire-adjacent ZIP codes in Siskiyou, Modoc and Madera counties. Four days earlier he did the same for 40 ZIP codes in the wildfire perimeter of the Mosquito and Fairview fires in Riverside, Placer and El Dorado counties.

The moratoriums protect homeowners in affected areas from insurance non-renewal or cancellation for one year, regardless of whether they suffered a loss.

### Insurance options

If you receive a cancellation or non-renewal notice and you are not subject to a cancellation moratorium, you have a few options:

**Ask us to shop around for you** – We have access to a number of insurers and can cast a wide net. However, in many high-risk areas no insurers are willing to extend coverage.

**The non-admitted market** – These insurers are not licensed in California, but they are usually backed by global insurance giants like Lloyd's of London.

**California FAIR Plan** – You can qualify for this coverage only if you've received rejections from three different insurance companies. Expect your premium to balloon. Many homeowners are faced with 300% increases or more in the premium for scaled-down coverage.

These policies do not include homeowner's liability, and do not cover all the risks either. You'll need an additional policy called "differences in conditions" to cover those shortcomings.

### Protective measures

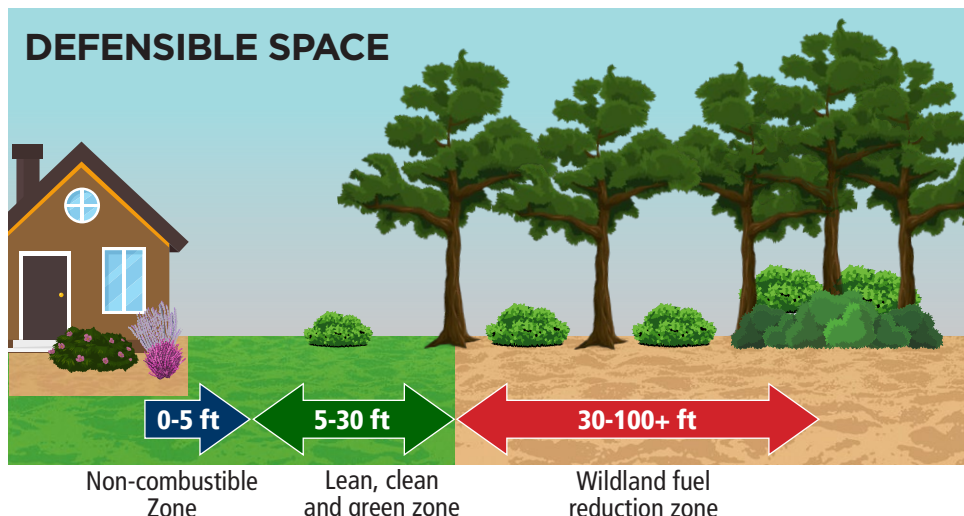
Homeowners should take steps to protect their properties from wildfire risk, as follows:

**Prepare defensible space** – Defensible space is essentially the firebreak immediately around your home. Many fire-prevention concepts are organized around maximizing defensible space. That requires maintaining and spacing vegetation, removing debris and keeping flammable items and plants away from the home's immediate perimeter.

Cal Fire recommends that you manage your property [in zones like this](#) to reduce the chances of your home going up in flames.

**Fire-proof your property** – Take steps to fireproof your home using fire-resistant materials and covers to reduce the chances of hot embers entering the building(s).

See 'Materials' on page 2



**INTERWEST**  
INSURANCE SERVICES, LLC

8950 Cal Center Dr., Bldg 3, Suite 200  
Sacramento, CA 95826

Phone: (800) 444-4134

Fax: (916) 979-7992

E-mail: [newsletters@iwins.com](mailto:newsletters@iwins.com)

[www.iwins.com](http://www.iwins.com)

CA License No.: 0B01094



# Tips to Keep Your Family Safe This Halloween

**H**ALLOWEEN IS a fun time for children and adults alike, but sometimes accidents happen.

That's why it's a good idea to take precautions to make sure that all family members, including pets, enjoy a safe experience. The most important thing is ensuring that your kids are safe when trick-or-treating, but Halloween parties can also pose risks to your family, guests and property.

The American Academy of Pediatrics provides some great advice:

## Choose costumes wisely

- Plan costumes that are reflective and brightly colored. Be certain that shoes fit well and that costumes are short. Your kids can trip on long costumes, or they can become entangled or come into contact with flame.
- When shopping for costumes, only buy ones made from flame-resistant materials.
- Instead of a mask that can limit eyesight, consider a decorative hat or non-toxic face make-up.
- Children and grown-ups should carry flashlights with fresh batteries when outside trick-or-treating.
- Never use decorative contact lenses as part of a costume. They can be dangerous and can cause infection.
- Teach your children to never trick-or-treat alone. They should go in a group with a parent. All young groups should be chaperoned.

## Safe pumpkin-carving

- Never allow young children to carve their own pumpkins. Instead, ask your child to draw the face on the pumpkin that you can then carve. Or decorate your pumpkin using colorful

paints, glue and accessories.

- Instead of putting a candle in your pumpkin, consider lighting yours with a glow stick or flashlight. If you prefer a candle, use a votive candle.
- Candle-lit pumpkins should be placed on a sturdy surface away from curtains and other flammable materials. Don't leave a candle-lit pumpkin unattended.

## Making your house safe

- When getting ready for visitors at your home, remove anything that they could trip over in the dark. Make sure garden hoses, decorations, toys and bikes are not in walkways or on porches.
- Ensure bulbs in outside lights are working, and change any burnt-out ones.
- Restrain your pets so they are not tempted to follow visitors out of your yard. Restraining pets also provides safety for your visitors.
- Sweep any wet leaves away from walkways, steps and porches to prevent slipping and falling.

## Monitor your kids' treats

- Though tampering is rare, inspect treats that come home from trick-or-treating or from holiday gatherings. Make sure nothing is spoiled, unwrapped or looks suspicious in any way.
- Don't let children have unlimited access to festive candy and treats. Teach them to eat sweets in moderation and save some candy for another day.
- Keep candy, especially chocolate, out of the reach of pets. Candy is not good for pets, and chocolate can be lethal. ❖

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# Use Non-Flammable Materials on Your Home's Exterior

## Protecting the Structure

- Roof your home with Class A-rated materials.
- Treat a wooden roof with a fire-retardant coating.
- Install non-flammable siding.
- Install mesh screens of 1/8" or less in vents and chimneys to block flaming embers.
- Replace single-pane windows with dual-pane ones.
- Use tempered glass in all windows.

## A final word

The wildfire threat continues spreading and every year more homes are put at risk.

For more detailed information on fireproofing your home, including information on design and building materials, download the Colorado State Forest Service guide, "[FireWise Construction: Site Design and Building Materials.](#)"

Also, if you are concerned about your insurance coverage, call us to discuss your options. ❖



## Auto Insurance

# Expect Long Accident Repair Times, Rental Issues

**D**UE TO supply chain issues, labor shortages and work backlogs, the time it takes to repair a vehicle has increased substantially in the last year.

What used to take two weeks maximum can now take more than a month, and that leaves some people in a bind with their insurance.

The standard auto insurance policy will typically reimburse for rental car costs for up to 30 days after an accident, as long as the policyholder opted for car rental reimbursement.

But due to longer repair times, some people are exceeding their 30-day rental car coverage and having to pay out of pocket during the excess time it takes fix their vehicle. Depending on what kind of car they are renting, the costs can run into the hundreds or even thousands of dollars.

### Insurance implications

While most policies limit car rental reimbursement to 30 days, some insurers have different rules. For example, a policy may have a daily and overall dollar limit per claim.

The rental reimbursement rate could be, say, \$35 per day/\$1,050 per claim. Since there is a dollar limit per claim, if you know the car is going to take longer than 30 days to repair, you could opt for a less expensive rental car.

Remember too that rental reimbursement will only cover the cost of the rental, and not the security deposit, fuel and supplemental coverage you may choose to cover the rented vehicle.

You should also check with your insurance carrier whether you will pay for the rental up front and be reimbursed by the insurer, or if the rental company can bill the company directly.

Many insurers have relationships with car rental companies that can often arrange for direct billing.

One exception to the 30-day rule is if the accident was caused by another driver. In that case, the at-fault driver's insurer would pay for the rental vehicle for a reasonable amount of time as the car is being repaired or replaced, which may exceed 30 days.

At the same time, it can take longer to get reimbursed as the other driver's insurance company will need time to verify the claim before approving payment. ❖

### Repair delays getting worse

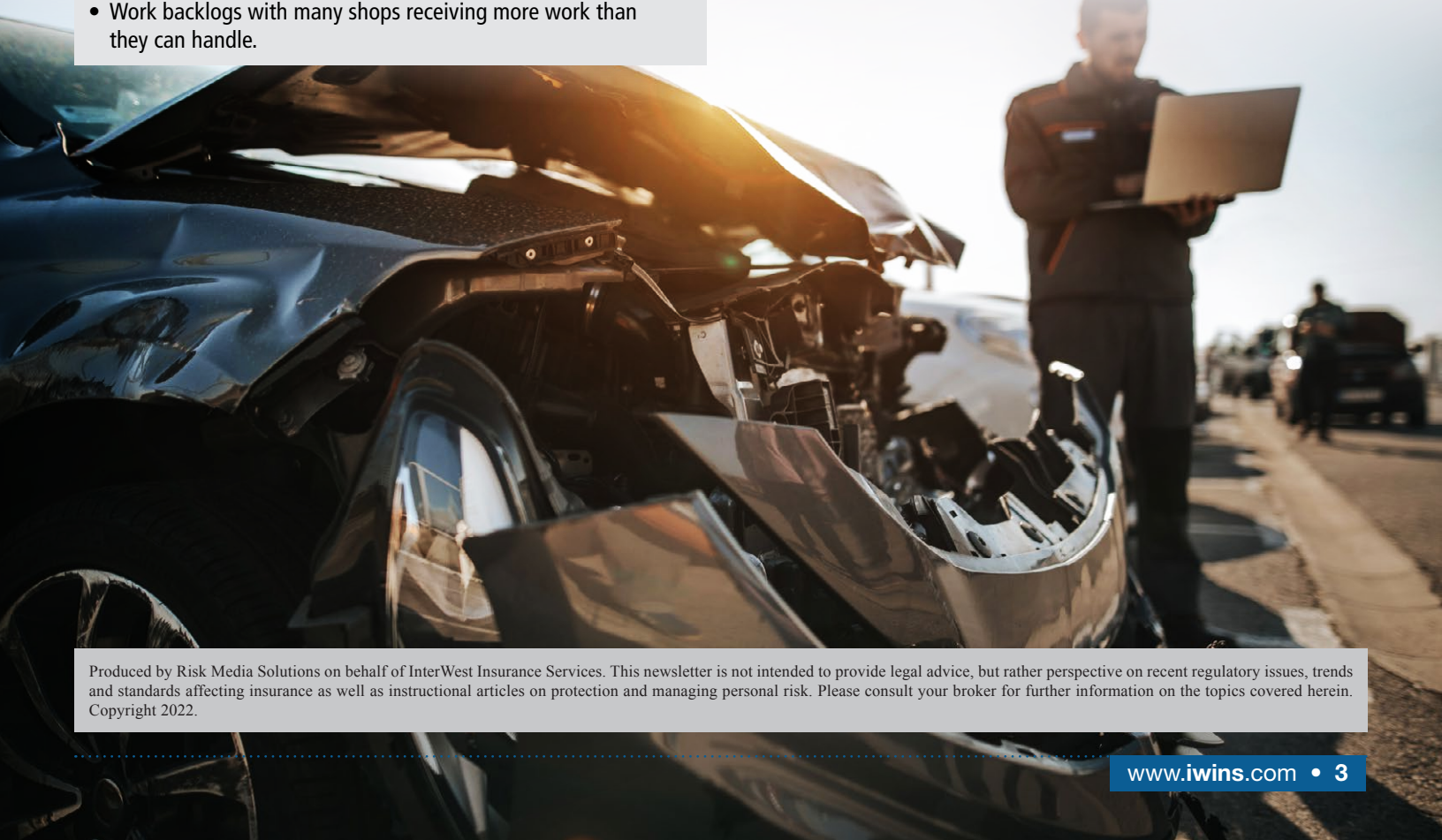
**5 Days Longer:** It took five days longer to repair cars in Spring 2022 than it did in Spring 2021.

**Eight-week wait times:** More than 13% of shops are scheduling more than eight weeks out. Shops with three months of backlog are not uncommon.

Sources: Enterprise Rent-a-Car and CCC Intelligent Solutions.

### What's causing delays

- Delays and backlogs in receiving parts due to global supply chain snarls.
- Shortage of skilled workers with body shop experience.
- Work backlogs with many shops receiving more work than they can handle.



## Home Inventory

# Apps, Websites to Help You Document Your Stuff

**I**F YOU have to file a homeowner's insurance claim after a fire or other event, having a home inventory will make it much easier to document your losses for your insurance carrier and get your settlement much faster.

A home inventory is essentially an itemized list of everything of value in your home, proof of ownership, and how much it's worth. Without one, you will likely end up scrambling to provide proof of your losses to your insurance company, particularly if your receipts were damaged or destroyed.

Fortunately, it's easy and inexpensive to get going on one thanks to a plethora of apps and websites, like the following:

### The Complete Home Journal

The Complete Home Journal is about the most complete inventory product for the hardcore record keeper.

The home inventory module lets you input critical details and photographs of all your belongings, including electronics, seasonal gear, jewelry and appliances. But that's just one of several modules.

Other modules include home-improvement tracking, home and seasonal to-do lists. This program also stores contractor information and information on real estate agents, lenders and can even help you calculate cost basis for income tax and real estate sales.

You'll need Windows 7 or higher to run it, or run Virtual PC for Mac on a Mac. The cost is \$29.99, with a 30-day money-back guarantee and a free trial period.

### Sortly

While you can pay for premium options with Sortly, the free version has everything you need for a basic inventory. It comes with space for up to 200 items, and for a recurring fee, you can store unlimited items.

It has various built-in checklists to stay organized even if you have no idea where to start keeping track of things. Sortly's sleek, modern interface is attractive and is easily the best-looking tool on this list.

You can get the free Sortly app for iOS and Android. In-app purchases begin at \$4.99. The Advanced rate plan costs \$39/month or \$468 annually.

**SNAP AWAY:** Take photos of your receipts to keep an electronic record of all your possessions.

### Encircle

The free, sleek and easy-to-use Encircle Home Inventory App works great on iPhones and Android devices, and also via a Web portal.

You can organize items by room and save multiple photos for each item, so you can photograph the item and your receipt. According to Encircle, Inc., "In about an hour or less the average user can create a complete picture inventory of a property and generate detailed reports."

Encircle can be used for insurance purposes, estate planning, relocation and moving, or decorating.

### Stuffanizer

This innovative solution supports a drag and drop interface. It also supports unlimited hierarchical locations, so you can note an item's location in an envelope, in a briefcase, in a sack, in the closet, or in the second bedroom.

The unique interface lets you drag and drop items from one location to another. You can also associate items with each other using tags, such as #borrowedobjects, #electronics, #cables and anything else you need to be able to get your hands on fast.

So far this one only works on iOS devices at the moment. The cost: \$2.99.

For more information, visit [www.stuffanizer.com](http://www.stuffanizer.com). ❖

