



**INTERWEST**  
INSURANCE SERVICES, LLC

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## NEWSBLAST

### Homeowner's Issues

# Holding a Yard or Garage Sale? Check Your Coverage

**W**HILE A YARD sale may transform your spring-cleaning chores into a profitable day of getting rid of unwanted items, it can also create a setting for a legal nightmare, if a visitor injures themselves while on your property. If anyone that's stopped by your sale, slips, trips, falls or is injured by one of your items, it could lead to a lawsuit.

Liabilities arising from yard or garage sales being held on your property would usually be covered under a standard homeowner's insurance policy.

Most standard homeowner's policies will provide \$100,000 worth of liability coverage for property damage or bodily injury to third parties visiting your home. The liability portion of your policy may cover your legal defense and any resulting monetary judgments against you.

The above may seem adequate for a yard sale, but if someone is seriously injured it would likely be insufficient.

You may consider raising your policy's liability coverage to at least \$300,000 to \$500,000. An excess liability or umbrella policy can provide additional protection and won't typically cost more than \$350 a year for \$1 million in liability protection.

### The exception

Your homeowner's policy may cover your garage sale if it's a one-time event, but not if it's a regular thing.

If you are holding frequent yard sales, like multiple times a month, the insurer may consider your activity a home-based business and deny a claim.

To avoid that scenario, the best course of action would be to look into buying a home-based business or commercial policy, depending on your foot traffic, to ensure coverage of any incidents. Call us to discuss your circumstances so we can find the best solution for you.

### Safety Tips

- Display merchandise in an organized manner on sturdy tables, making sure to eliminate any potential tripping hazards, like extension cords and items laying on the ground.
- Keep your pets indoors or in the backyard during the sale. Even friendly dogs can get territorial when strangers are at your home.
- Repair any loose railings or cracked concrete that could be a possible hazard for customers.
- Don't sell alone. Instead, have your spouse, a friend or family member with you to keep track of items and help customers.
- Do not sell dangerous items like knives, swords, firearms, martial arts weapons, fireworks, etc.
- Help customers carry or move any larger items purchased to their car.
- Hold your sale on a weekend with nice weather, making sure to have sale times clearly listed.
- Provide shade and water for customers if it's a hot day.



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## Digital Scams

# Do You Barely Use Your RV? Don't Forget Maintenance

**I**F YOU own an RV and haven't found the time to get it on the road much during the last few years, it's important that you continue maintaining the vehicle.

Ideally, you should be parking it in a covered area, but that's not always possible depending on the space you have available. You'll need to take special care if you are storing your RV in an uncovered area, where it is exposed to the elements 24/7.

RV repair costs can quickly add up, but with regular preventive maintenance, you can reduce the chances of these expensive repairs needing to happen. Consider these specific tips for looking after each key part of your vehicle:

### Invest in a high-quality cover

To prevent weather-related damage, you should consider purchasing an RV cover that can be draped over the entire vehicle. A cover is one of the best damage prevention tools you can find, so look for one that's made of solid construction.

### Read the owner's manual

You'll want to service and maintain your RV as recommended in the owner's manual.

### The roof

The roof of your RV is exposed to all the elements if parked outdoors, including harsh summer sun and excessive heat, wind, rain, snow and hail. You should make a habit of regularly inspecting the roof for damage, like cracks, flaking and peeling.

To avoid extensive damage, be careful of where you park, particularly if it's under a tree that drops fruits, berries, seeds, sap or other stuff that will sit and fester on the roof if left unattended.

If your RV comes equipped with a factory-installed ladder, you'll be able to walk on the roof. If it doesn't, use a ladder to work on your roof from the side.

When washing the roof, simply use a car cleaning solution mixed with water.

Every six months, inspect the roof seals and seams to ensure they are intact and not leaking. If you spot any issues, have them repaired immediately to prevent further damage.

Repairing water damage can be extremely costly. Considering applying sealant to the seals and seams to prevent future leaks from occurring.

If your RV has a rubber roof, you should treat it annually to prevent sun damage.

### Awnings

When storing your RV make sure to retract the awning to avoid damage, particularly from winds or mold and mildew.

Clean the awning with a proper awning cleaner at least once a year. These can be found at most RV supply stores and should be sprayed onto the awning before scrubbing or rinsing.

Also, inspect your awning annually if you rarely use your RV, including:

**Brackets and poles** — Look for missing screws or signs of bending. Also look for broken rivets or enlarged holes in the handles. All of these can cause issues in the future if they are not repaired.

**Awning end caps** — Check for signs of damage and broken or missing rivets.

**Mounting hardware** — Ensure that the awning is properly secured to the RV.

**Fabric** — Thoroughly inspect the awning fabric, keeping an eye out for tears or signs of excessive wear.

### Slide-outs

Once a year, check your slide-out to make sure that nothing is sticking when you retract or open it. Clear out any debris you find and apply slide-out lubricant to ensure easy functioning. ❖





## ONLINE SECURITY

# Seven Ways to Protect Yourself from Identity Theft

**T**HANKS TO a stream of news reports, by now you should know that your personal information can be compromised – leaving you open to identity theft and your financial accounts vulnerable.

Fortunately, there are ways to lower your risk of becoming an identity theft victim. *Bankrate.com* recommended the following in a recent blog:

### Don't over-share on social networks

A 2011 Javelin report found long-time social networking users were almost twice as likely as those newer to social networking to become victims of ID theft.

Javelin recommends setting your privacy settings at the highest level on these sites and not sharing facts like your exact birth date, including the year, or information that could be used to answer your security questions, such as your mother's maiden name.

### Use anti-virus and anti-malware software

The most common way to unleash malware and ransomware is by clicking on malicious links or attachments in seemingly genuine e-mails. From there, they can record keystrokes to mine passwords, hijack online banking sessions and probe your PC for financial information.

Anti-malware software can detect such links and remove them before you click. Another way to thwart hackers looking for sensitive data is to limit the amount of financial information you keep on your computer.

### Handle financial documents with care

Keep your paper documents secure at home and, when you are purging credit card and bank statements, shred everything before putting it in the trash. Thieves can do a lot with those statements, which give them access to your personal information.

### Create strong passwords

Avoid using easy-to-crack passwords, like "11111" or "password." Mix it up. Use a combination of capital and lower-case letters, spaces, numbers and special characters, if possible.

Also, don't use the same password across different sites. Another good tactic is to decline every time a financial website asks to save your password when you're logging on.

### Be careful with unsecured Wi-Fi

Criminals have become good at intercepting unsecured Wi-Fi communications, so you should avoid logging on to your bank account when using a coffee shop connection.

Also, make sure that your home Wi-Fi has a difficult password.

### Don't bite on phishing scams

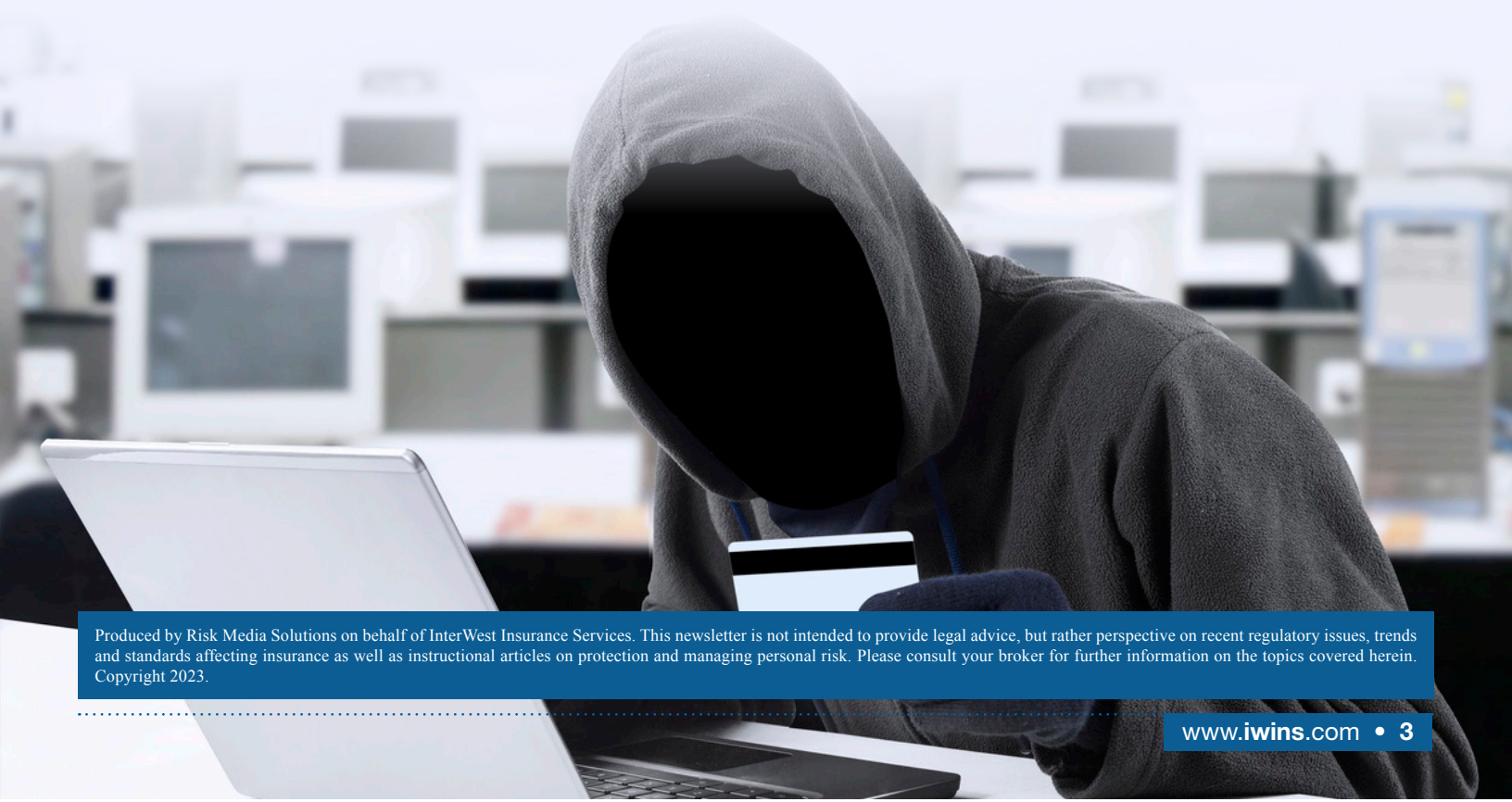
Phishing, or the practice of sending out fraudulent e-mails soliciting financial information or getting users to click on virus-laden links or attachments, is a growing identity theft threat.

To avoid becoming a victim, read e-mails carefully before clicking on links or attachments, especially if an e-mail comes from out of the blue or asks for personal or financial information. Look for strange word usage, misspelled words and odd uses of grammar. They are usually signs of a fraudulent e-mail.

### Monitor credit and bank accounts

Checking your credit card and debit card statements online on a daily basis is a good way to keep tabs on any fraudulent activity.

Look at the accounts carefully because often, credit card thieves will make small purchases that most people may not notice. ♦



# As Home Value Rises, So Does Coverage Complexity



**T**HE MORE your home is worth, the trickier it is to make sure that it and all of its contents are covered properly and that you are not paying too much for your premium.

First, a typical homeowner's insurance policy may not be suitable. If you have a high-value estate with expensive furnishings, décor and collectibles, you will likely need specialized insurance to cover your property and assets for damage or loss.

Also, you may sometimes need multiple policies to make sure that all facets of the home – structure and contents – are insured to a level that you are comfortable with.

## What's a high-value home?

Most insurance companies will consider an estate worth more than \$750,000 a candidate for high-value home insurance. For others, it's \$1 million or more.

What's considered high-value will vary depending on the insurance company and the region in which you live. It pays to work with us to find the right policy choices for your home.

## The coverage

High-value home coverage essentially goes beyond what a typical homeowner's policy will cover.

These policies include broader coverage and higher limits than normal homeowner's insurance.

They are designed for homes that are worth millions of dollars and typically contain state-of-the-art media equipment and technology, costly appointments and furnishings, extensive collections of art and many other items of great value.

## Coverage options

High-value home insurance companies will often work with you to tailor your policy to your needs. With this bespoke approach, you can add certain coverages that would not normally be available on a typical homeowner's policy, such as:

- **Guaranteed full replacement cost** – Most standard homeowner's policies don't guarantee full repair or replacement in the event of a major loss. High-value

home insurance typically covers these costs. If after a total loss the insured doesn't want to rebuild the home, a standard policy would not pay out. But many high-value home policies give the equivalent of the replacement cost in cash.

- **Excess liability and umbrella liability coverage** – If you are a high-net-worth individual and find yourself involved in an accident that results in an injury to a third party, you could be in for an expensive lawsuit. Having excess liability insurance will provide full coverage for lawsuits, including hiring the best possible attorneys and paying any settlements or restitution that a court may order.
- **Flood insurance** – Traditional homeowner's insurance policies do not provide coverage for flood damage. For the most part, homeowners have to buy this coverage from the National Flood Insurance Program. But a high-value homeowner's policy will often include flood insurance, as well as coverage for sewer backups.
- **Living expenses coverage** – Most high-value home policies provide generous, if not essentially unlimited, coverage for living expenses.
- **Coverage for vacation homes** – Many insurers will allow you to include coverage for other structures, including pool houses and vacation homes. By combining this coverage into one policy, you can save money while maintaining the full coverage you need.

## Keeping your policy up to date

It is expensive to cover theft or loss in a high-value home.

Being in a gated community and/or having a security system in place at your home can significantly reduce risks, and insurance companies may discount your premium based on this. Keep them up to date on any such changes.

When you make any upgrades to your home, you may want to update your policy by having a new insurance appraisal.

You should also keep track of all your new purchases in terms of furnishings and technology. ❖