



INTERWEST
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NEWSBLAST

Protecting Your Family

Safeguard Against Costly Thanksgiving Mishaps



THERE ARE an average of 2,300 home fires on Thanksgiving Day each year, according to the US Fire Administration. That's more than three times as many that occur during a typical day of the year. The leading cause of these fires is unattended cooking.

Even if you aren't going to be at home, there is still a risk: burglary. It's important to do what you can to thwart any thieves. To make sure that Thanksgiving doesn't turn into the Nightmare before Christmas, consider the following:

Kitchen safety tips

- Never leave the kitchen while cooking on the stove top. Some types of cooking, especially those that involve frying or sautéing with oil, need continuous attention.
- When cooking a turkey, remain at home and check it regularly.
- Turkey fryers increase your risk of burn or fire hazards. Be sure the oil used to fry the turkey is the right temperature, and always fry outside in a well-ventilated area.
- Use timers to keep track of cooking times, particularly for foods that take longer to cook.
- Keep things that can catch fire – like oven mitts, wooden utensils, food wrappers and towels – at least 3 feet away from the cooking area.
- Avoid long sleeves and hanging fabrics that can come in contact with a heat source.
- Always cook with a lid beside your pan. If you have a fire, slide the lid over the pan and turn off the burner. Do not remove the cover because the fire could start again. Let the pan cool for a long time. Never throw water on the fire.
- For an oven fire, turn off the heat and keep the door closed. Only open the door once you're confident the fire is completely out, standing to the side as you do so. If you have any doubts or concerns, contact the fire department for assistance.
- Keep children at least 3 feet away from the stove. Kids should also stay away from hot foods and liquids, as steam or splash from these items could cause severe burns.

When traveling

If you are traveling for the holiday, protect your home while you're away to reduce the risk of burglary. Consider these tips:

Install a home security system — Many modern systems have a number of features to give you peace of mind. They can alert you if a burglar enters your home and some services can also alert local law enforcement.

Some systems offer round-the-clock fire monitoring services or allow you to check in from your smartphone while you are away.

Don't post travel plans on Facebook — Even if you don't make your posts public, you should still be cautious about posting your travel plans for all your contacts to see.

Make your home look occupied — To make it seem like someone is still home, set your lights on timers that turn on at night, and stop mail and newspaper delivery.

Make life hard for burglars — To ensure that breaking into your home isn't easy:

- Lock all windows, gates and doors.
- Install sensor lights that turn on if they sense motion.
- Never leave a key hidden outside, like under a rock or the mat. Leave it with a neighbor you trust instead. ❖



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Homeowner's Issues

Preventing Financial Loss During a Remodel

MOST HOMEOWNERS will tackle a home remodeling at some point. Regardless of the magnitude of the job, you can minimize your risk of financial loss by making sure the right insurance is in place before and after a remodel.

It's easy to hope nothing is going to happen, but an incident is much more likely to happen during construction. Failing to address this possibility beforehand can cost you hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Before the remodel

The most important thing you want to do before you agree to hire a contractor is to make sure the company has a contractor's liability insurance policy in place. The minimum amount of coverage your contractor should have is \$1 million.

If the contractor has workers, then you should ask for a workers' compensation policy as well. In some cases, the contractor will state that the workers are subcontractors and thus not true employees, so they don't need workers' compensation insurance.

However, the legal system may very well view these "subcontractors" as employees. As such, this can put you at risk should an injury occur to any of these workers.

Here are the characteristics of true subcontractors:

- They have contractor's licenses.
- They have their own insurance.
- They specialize in one type of contracting.
- They may have employees.
- They have their own vehicles and equipment.

If most of these characteristics are not present, then there is a good chance the legal system can deem them as an employee of the general contractor. Again, this can put you at risk if the contractor does not carry any workers' compensation insurance.

It's worth paying more to hire the right contractor than have to deal with a contractor that doesn't have the right insurance in place.

A contractor without appropriate insurance rarely wants to admit this. This is why it's important to ask for a certificate of insurance for these policies directly from the contractor's agent.

Make sure the dates are current or will at least offer coverage throughout the duration of your remodel job. If the policy is going to expire in the middle of the project, make sure you get an updated certificate.

In addition, you may want to secure a builder's risk policy for the uninstalled material that is stored on the premises. Depending on your remodel situation, this may or may not be covered by your homeowner's insurance.

Please check with us before you plan on having raw materials stored on your property. It is also best to discuss any other insurance issues with your agent.

After construction

Once construction is complete, you should review your homeowner's policy coverage with us. The top priority is to make sure your home is fully insured according to the new rebuilding value.

If you have done an interior remodel and not an expansion, you have likely increased the cost per square footage.

If you have done an expansion, then you need to account for your additional square footage. We will do an updated replacement cost estimate, which will take into account the characteristics of your rebuilt home.

This is extremely important, since you have invested tens of thousands of dollars upgrading your property. You need to update your coverage to protect that investment. ❖



Auto Coverage

Why EV Insurance Costs Are Higher Than for Gas Cars

IF YOU'VE been considering purchasing an electric vehicle, be sure that you consider the cost of insuring it before you buy.

Due to the complexity of these vehicles and higher repair costs, even the least expensive EVs like the Chevy Bolt and the Nissan Leaf cost more to insure than gas-powered cars that are larger.

There is some debate whether those added costs are balanced out by lower operating costs, including not having to purchase gas and cheaper overall maintenance as there are fewer things that can go wrong with an EV compared to a gas-powered vehicle.

Insurance is an important consideration, especially now as rates have been climbing steadily for more than a decade — and with costs rising sharply in the last two years.

Insurance Costs: EV vs. Gas*

Gas vehicles

2022 Honda CR-V: \$1,808

2022 Toyota Corolla: \$1,991

2022 Nissan Altima: \$2,263

EVs

2022 Chevy Bolt 11LT: \$2,269

2022 Nissan Leaf S: \$2,313

2023 Audi E-Tron Quattro Premium: \$3,244

2023 Tesla Model S: \$4,762

* Average in October 2024

Source: Quadrant Information Services

Average Repair Prices*



Gas Cars

Toyota Corolla: \$362

Nissan Altima: \$483



Hybrid

Toyota Prius: \$408



Electric

Nissan Leaf: \$748

Tesla Model S: \$1,047

* As of October 2024

Source: Repairpal

Why EV insurance is costlier

There are a number of reasons EV insurance is more expensive:

EVs are more expensive – According to Kelley Blue Book, the average price of an EV was \$58,940 in March 2024, nearly \$11,000 more than the average cost of a new gas-driven vehicle then. The sales price has a direct correlation with the cost of insurance.

Costlier repairs – Parts are more expensive for EVs. As well, many of these vehicles have sophisticated camera systems throughout the vehicle to help drive-assist and self-driving technologies work properly.

There is also a scarcity of replacement parts, which results in longer repair times and higher costs.

But the single-most expensive part to repair or replace in an EV is the battery. The average cost of replacing a battery can be anywhere from \$4,489 all the way to \$17,658, according to a July 2023 article in *ConsumerAffairs*, an online publication.

Scarcity of qualified repair shops – Repairing these vehicles requires specialized training and there are not many independent garages that have the capacity to repair them.

That leads to backed-up work orders. In addition, there's a shortage of technicians who are qualified to work on EVs.

What the future holds

Industry watchers predict that the cost of EVs and their associated repair costs will eventually start to drop as more drivers purchase these vehicles and more qualified repair facilities come on line. That in turn should affect insurance costs as well.

But for now, expect to pay more to insure an EV versus a gas-powered vehicle.

A final point: there is some good news, as some insurers offer discounts for EVs because they are involved in fewer fire-related accidents and are more eco-friendly. ❖

Flying Into Trouble

A Drone Can Be a Serious Threat to Your Assets

SOME PERSONAL drone enthusiasts push the limits on how they use their drones, put people's lives in danger – and sometimes hamper public safety efforts during emergencies.

The problem of individuals flying their drones into disaster areas surfaced in 2017 during the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey. The authorities had to issue warnings for drone operators to stay away from rescue areas after several close calls with rescue aircraft.

During wildfires in Northern California wildfires in 2023, the state had to suspend firefighting plane flights on more than a dozen occasions because drones were illegally flying in the area.

If any of these drones cause an accident, the human and financial cost could be staggering. Likewise, if your teenaged son injures someone or causes property damage with his drone, the liability would likely fall squarely on you.

Even if you fly your drone responsibly, accidents can happen, injuring a third party or damaging their property. Often though, you won't need to buy a separate drone policy if you have homeowner's or renter's insurance.

What homeowner's covers

Besides covering your home and property against fire, leaks, theft and other risks, the standard homeowner's insurance policy also covers liability claims, like if you crash your drone through your neighbor's window.

There are two coverages that come into play.

Property damage. If you crash your drone into your own living room window, since the drone is your personal property, you may file a claim against the drone and your insurance may pay you out for the damage, after deductibles. Insurers in this case would likely treat your drone like a remote control airplane.

Liability. If your drone injures a third party, your homeowner's liability coverage would pay their medical bills. Be warned though, if the costs exceed your policy limits the injured party may sue you and you could be on the hook for further damages. The liability portion of the policy would, however, likely cover your legal fees.

Still, you may want to check your liability limits and talk to us to see if they are adequate. Often minimum liability limits in homeowner's policies may not be enough if someone is seriously injured or loses an eye.

If you are regularly using your drone in areas where there are other people, you may want to consider increasing the coverage if you can.

Most homeowner's insurance policies provide a minimum of \$100,000 worth of liability insurance, but higher amounts are available and, increasingly, the Insurance Information Institute recommends that homeowners consider purchasing at least \$300,000 to \$500,000 worth of liability coverage.

If you still feel like your liability coverage won't be enough and want to enjoy playing with your drone, anxiety-free, consider an umbrella policy.

Umbrella coverage

Umbrella coverage gives you an additional layer of liability coverage for more serious incidents of injury or property damage to a third party.

After all, medical and legal expenses can add up quickly and you likely don't have the cash lying around to cover any excess amounts above your homeowner's insurance policy limits.

Invest in this type of coverage if you want to protect your assets.



Umbrella coverage consists of bodily injury and property damage liability coverage. It will cover:

- Injured party's medical expenses
- Third party property damage
- Legal expenses if they sue you.

The coverage comes in increments of \$1 million. The premiums can range from around \$300 or \$400 a year for each \$1 million in coverage.

