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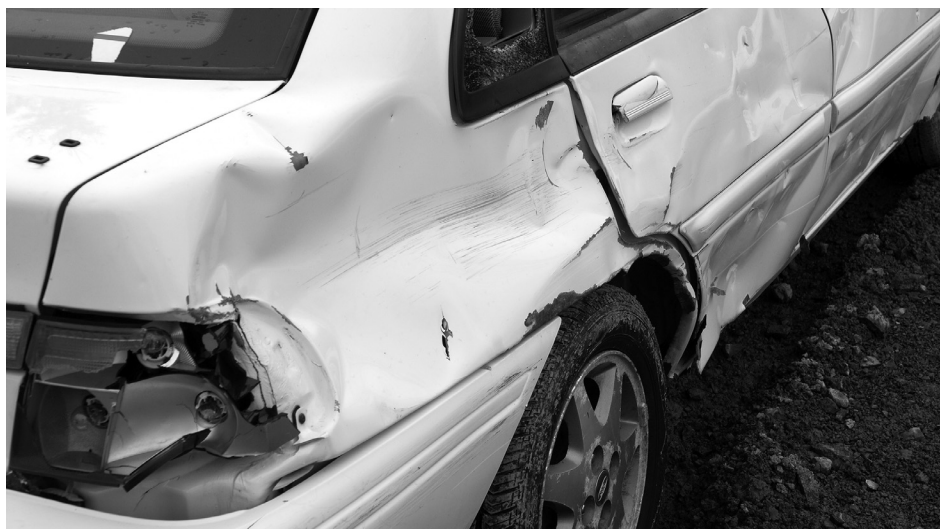
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CRASH TAXES

A traffic accident is one of the most unnerving events a driver can face. Even if the drivers are unharmed, damage can occur to one or all cars involved. The police often are summoned, insurance information may be exchanged and you may have to file a claim with your insurer. In the unfortunate scenarios where an accident is severe, emergency responders may need to clean up spilled automotive fluids, glass and repair damage to roadside fixtures such as signs and lights. In the past, motorists expected that the police, emergency and medical responses were provided by the taxpayers of the municipality where the accident occurred. However, many accident victims are surprised to learn that the municipalities expect to be compensated for their time and efforts of responding to an accident. Many of the municipalities that have adopted this practice are located in resort or vacation destinations, where most accidents involve cars owned by nonresidents; accordingly, the municipality wishes to recover from those receiving the benefit provided by the locality's residents. Generally, the driver at fault in an accident is more likely to receive a bill, but this is not always the case.

Linwood, Atlantic City and Wildwood are among the New Jersey municipalities that have begun charging crash fees. Fees can range from \$70 for fluid cleanup in one town to more than \$2,000 for extraction of a trapped motorist in another. Motorists being hit with these fees wonder if they are required to pay by law, and whether their insurance covers it. The answer to both questions is that it varies between municipality and insurer. Some towns have enacted laws giving the emergency responders legal authority behind any request for payment, while some have considered the issue and actively declined to do so. Various insurers take differing stances on this issue; some pay while others decline to do so, or only pay in specific instances. In any case, if you are in an accident, call our office. In any case, if you are in an accident, call our office. We will help you navigate the process of submitting your claim.



BUYING FLOOD INSURANCE WILL HELP PROTECT YOUR HOME

Flood damage is not covered by your homeowners insurance. Floods are the most common natural disaster in the U. S. Given the amount of snow the Northeast receives, the arrival of spring could bring some serious flooding in our area.

Most people know of the need for flood insurance in high-risk or coastal areas but, it is important to note that as much as 25 percent of all floods occur in low- and medium-risk flood zones. Mention “flood” and most of us envision whole towns under water or huge waves pounding seacoast homes. But, flooded basements and sewer backups can be just as damaging. The fact is, flooding can result from any period of heavy rain or snow melt, and it can happen in any part of the country.

The cost of purchasing flood insurance is likely to be far cheaper in the long run than the payments on a loan to repair the flood damage.

Flood insurance typically has a 30-day waiting period before coverage goes into effect. If you are concerned that your home may be at risk for flood damage, give our office a call today, before it's too late!



GEAR UP FOR SUMMER

Summer's almost here—time for camping, fishing and all the fun warm-weather activities summer brings. Before slipping into your swimsuit and slathering on suntan lotion, consider this: Do any of your favorite summertime hobbies involve a recreational vehicle? If so, do you have insurance protecting that vehicle against loss?



EXACTLY WHAT IS A RECREATIONAL VEHICLE?

A recreational vehicle is just what it sounds like: one that is used primarily for enjoyment or relaxation. For example, a speedboat that you run only during the summer, or the motorcycle you ride on the weekends both count as recreational vehicles.

WHY DO YOU NEED SPECIAL INSURANCE?

Most recreational vehicles don't come cheap and represent a substantial investment. Shouldn't you protect these assets just like you do your home or automobile? Additionally, if another person uses your vehicle and is injured, an insurance policy would reduce the legal liability you might face.

Need further convincing? Here are specific examples of recreational vehicles and reasons you should insure them.

Motorcycles: According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Institute, motorcyclists are 35 times more likely than passenger car occupants to die in a crash. If that isn't enough to make you seek coverage, keep in mind that, according to Insurance Crime Bureau Statistics, nearly a quarter of motorcycles that are stolen are never recovered.

Motorhomes: Obviously, the coverage needs for this dual-purpose vehicle are going to be unique. Sometimes these needs can be met by adding coverage to your auto policy, but a separate policy often is required.



All-terrain vehicles:

A typical homeowners policy will cover liability for vehicles, like ATVs, so long as they remain on your property. Of course, any seasoned ATV rider knows that half the fun is cruising on one. Additionally, ATVs have a notoriously high theft rate, so why take any chances by not purchasing the needed insurance protection?

Boats:

Different boats require different types and levels of coverage. For example, a speedboat would create higher risk than a rowboat. Like so many other recreational vehicles listed here, boats are an expensive investment that you should be prepared to protect.

Summer fun is just around the corner. Before the temperature heats up, ensure your favorite summer toys are protected and to give us a call if you have any questions or concerns about your recreational vehicles.

DOES YOUR SPRING CLEANING INVOLVE DAMAGE CAUSED BY WINTER STORMS?

This past winter left the Northeast covered in snow and ice; people were stranded without power for days; and homes and vehicles were damaged. Now that the spring thaw is here, it's time to think about getting to the repairs that may have been put on hold.

When the damage originally occurred, you should have taken pictures to serve as a visual record and kept receipts of all the repairs you may have made in the interim. But now what?

First, give our agency a call. We can go over your homeowners or automobile policy with you and let you know exactly what's covered and what isn't.

FOR YOUR HOME ...

Under a standard homeowners policy, damage caused by wind, trees (and other falling objects) and a structure collapse (caused by the weight of ice or snow) usually are covered. Damage caused by frozen pipes might not be covered, if precautions were not taken to avoid the damage.

Interior water damage, flooding, removal of fallen trees (if they don't land on your home or other structure) and spoiled food are not covered under a standard homeowners policy.

Endorsements may exist that can be added to your policy to cover these types of damages. If you are interested in adding these coverages to your homeowners policy, we'll be more than happy to help you. Just remember, certain coverages, like flood insurance, have a waiting period before they become activated—so don't wait until the height of the spring thaw to ask us about flood insurance. (See related article on opposite page.)

FOR YOUR CAR ...

Report car accidents to the police and to us as soon as possible. Keep a detailed account of when and where the accident happened; the road conditions; make/year of all the vehicles involved; damage and injuries; and your version of what happened. Exchange insurance information, names, addresses, telephone numbers and drivers license numbers of all those involved at the scene of the accident. And, make sure to get the contact information of any witnesses.

Being without a car can be a hassle; we will help get you back on the road as quickly as possible. It's a good idea to review your auto-insurance policy now, before an accident occurs. We can make sure you have the necessary coverage for repairs and coverage that will pay for the use of a rental vehicle if necessary.

Do you have questions about your homeowners or auto insurance policies? We have the answers. Call us; we'll make sure you have the coverage you need year round.

THE SHOCKING TRUTH ABOUT GAP

Is "shocking" the right word? It depends on your tolerance for surprise billings in the amount of several thousand dollars. If your insured vehicle is damaged in an accident and is determined to be a total loss by your insurance company, the insurance company will pay an amount equal to the actual cash value of the vehicle. However, the loan or lease balance can be higher than the insured value and this difference represents GAP, which typically becomes the owner or lessee's responsibility to pay.

Have you noticed that large sport utility vehicles have lost their value because of unstable fuel costs? A SUV owner discovered just how severe this

depreciation can be when he suffered a total loss on his Jeep Cherokee. He had borrowed \$23,000 when he purchased the vehicle in 2005. Recently, it was damaged in an accident and declared a total loss. The insurer priced the vehicle and offered the owner \$10,000, leaving him \$8,000 short from paying off the outstanding balance on the loan. Are you feeling the shock yet? These gaps also can arise when little or no money is paid down on a new loan or lease.

Fortunately, you typically don't have to assume this risk. Our agency may have a remedy we can offer by means of a GAP coverage endorsement to your auto policy. This coverage can be compared in price and terms to the GAP waiver offered by the car dealer or lender. Often, the lender can finance the cost of the waiver, which will spread out the expense, but increase the interest charged over the life of the loan. The important thing is that you know your options in order to escape the shocking consequences of being unprotected for the GAP.



NEWS FROM OUR AGENCY

THE AGENCY WITH A PERSONAL TOUCH

Our agency is committed to providing you superior service. We know your insurance dollars can be spent in many ways. We want to earn your business by reviewing your coverage regularly, and helping you receive the best value for your investment.

PERSONAL ATTENTION

When you call, you will receive the personal attention that you want and deserve. You are a valued customer, not just an account number to our agency. You are a familiar face, a valued friend and a neighbor. We will be there for you when you need us most. Call us with any of your insurance needs.

