

# Insights & Updates

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## In this issue

- 2 You may need an umbrella
- 3 Renters need to protect their homes
- 4 Cyber insurance for your personal life
- 4 Independence is key

## Your dog may impact your premium

Dogs come in all shapes and sizes—the American Kennel Club has recognized a staggering 195 dog breeds. Despite that, all dogs—whether a chihuahua or a bull mastiff—come from the same species, and you may forget that they descend from wolves. However, insurance companies haven't forgotten the wild past of domesticated dogs, and it could impact your insurance premium.

When you purchase an insurance policy, you pay an insurance premium, which is based on many factors. One of those factors is the likelihood that a policyholder could suffer a loss. The higher the risk of loss, the higher the premium. For example, traditionally, policyholders with a pool or trampoline pay more than policyholders who do not have those amenities. How does that relate to dogs? Perhaps because of their wild, ferocious past, dogs are considered an additional risk by insurance companies, which means they may cause your insurance premiums to increase.

Typically, a homeowners or renters policy will provide coverage for liability arising out of dog ownership—usually related to a bite. According to the Insurance Information Institute,

liability claims related to dog bites and other dog-related injuries cost homeowners insurers \$854 million in 2020. For that reason, if a dog has a higher risk of causing a loss, the premium will be impacted.

While all dogs are the same species, insurance companies address dogs in different ways. While New Jersey law prohibits insurance companies from acting discriminatorily toward people, they can consider animals when determining a homeowner's or renter's premium.

As such, many insurance companies will charge an increased premium based on the breed of a dog. Some even may exclude liability coverage for certain breeds of dog altogether. Typically, larger breeds (e.g., pit bulls, rottweilers, German shepherds) will lead to higher premiums or excluded coverage. Other insurance companies may make decisions on a case-by-case basis, which are dependent not on the breed of the dog, but on any actual, vicious propensities of an individual dog.

Do you have questions on how a dog might impact your homeowners or renters premium? Give our office a call today and we will be happy to assist you.



# You may need an umbrella

Umbrella  
insurance costs  
**\$150-300/year**

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Umbrella policy  
limits start at  
**\$1 million—**  
but could go  
**as high as**  
**\$10 million**

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Insureds who buy  
**umbrella policies**  
include people  
who own:

**a swimming pool  
or trampoline**

**a business**

**certain breeds  
of dogs**

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When it rains, it pours. And, you may need additional coverage that standard policies don't offer. Commonly, these additional coverages are called umbrella policies. Many people don't realize that they may need it—so here are some reasons you might consider purchasing additional coverage:

- If the total value of your assets—including the money in your bank, investment and retirement accounts; and your home equity—exceeds the limits of your homeowners, renters, or auto policies, an umbrella policy helps cover the remainder—or more—of that value.
- If you are exposed to higher risks, an umbrella policy can assist in covering claims associated with those risks. Higher risks include renting out your property to others; employing people to work at your home (e.g., a housekeeper, a nanny); owning potentially dangerous commodities such as a pool or a trampoline; and even being someone who's well-known publicly.
- If you are at risk of being sued, an umbrella policy provides additional limits—and in some instances, broader coverage—in the event of a lawsuit. That way, your assets could be protected if a judgment goes against you. *Hint: Everyone is at risk of being sued.*

- If your teenager started driving recently, an umbrella over your auto policy could cover extensive damages that exceed the limit on your auto policy if he or she causes an accident.
- If you rent a car when traveling outside of the U.S., (excluding Canada and Puerto Rico), your personal auto policy may not cover you if you are involved in an accident. An umbrella on your auto policy could provide the additional coverage you would need if this happens. Check with us before you rent internationally.

**What umbrellas *don't* cover.** Umbrellas don't cover everything that your standard policies won't. Remember: Umbrella policies cover liability for injury to other people or for damage to other people's property, not your own injuries or damage to your own property. Additionally, it won't cover damage caused intentionally. Some other things umbrellas may not cover include liability for business-related claims—you would need a commercial general liability policy for that—and liability for violation of a written or oral contract.

If you think you need umbrella coverage—or if you need help deciding if you do—give our office a call today. We look forward to hearing from you.

# Renters need to protect their homes



As a renter, there are responsibilities that you should consider that will help you protect your home. From theft and burglary to frozen pipes and snow (and all the things in between), here are some tips that you can use to ensure that you, your family, your pets and your property are kept safe:

- 1. Meet your neighbors.** Strive to have—at least—a cordial relationship with your neighbors. Of course, this may be difficult if a neighbor is unwilling or otherwise unpleasant, or if you don't have any. But, when you have even the simplest relationship with them, they can provide additional surveillance for suspicious activity, property damage and safety hazards.
- 2. Buy a safe.** Safes provide additional security to important belongings like personal identification (e.g., birth certificate, Social Security card, passport), jewelry, money and anything else that's irreplaceable. And, many home safes are water- and fireproof. So, these items will be less likely to be

damaged from leaks, floods, smoke and fire.

- 3. Travel with caution.** Don't post online that you're away (or for how long)—and consider ways to appear that you're home. Ask friends or neighbors to watch your property and to collect your mail. Leave a light on a timer that could deter trespassers. And, unplug electronics to avoid potential fires. On your luggage, don't put your home address on the tags—these are rolling advertisements that you aren't home to anyone who sees it.
- 4. Be observant.** Look for signs that you or your home are in danger: Change the batteries in your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors; check the locks on doors and windows; look for leaks that could cause water damage and for access points used by rodents; and pay attention for dangerous scents like gas, smoke, mold and sewage.
- 5. Buy renters insurance.** Before you move in, purchase renters insurance

to start on the first day of your lease. While it won't cover damage to the structure itself, it will cover damage to your property that's inside the structure, including theft. If your rental unit becomes uninhabitable, it also may cover hotel expenses.

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- 6. Give us a call.** After an emergency, call 911 first. Then, give us a call so we can help you. And, talk to us ahead of time so we can ensure that you have adequate coverage for your belongings. We look forward to hearing from you.

# Cyber insurance for your personal life

Cyber insurance doesn't cover just businesses—individuals also could benefit from cyber coverage, outside of identity-theft protection.

We all are connected to the internet through our phones, tablets and computers constantly—any of which could become compromised or targeted by cybercriminals. While you may have identity-theft protection, additional coverage can protect you from other types of cyberthreats.

Simply, identity-theft protection through a homeowners policy isn't enough—it still could leave you vulnerable if you click a link accidentally that releases a virus onto your computer, or if you are blackmailed for money. A personal cyber insurance policy or a cyber liability policy can help you if these types of cyberthreats happen.

**Personal cyber insurance.** An example of a cyberattack could include if a cybercriminal poses as your bank to access your bank accounts. A personal cyberpolicy could reimburse you—up to your policy limits—for any loss associated with the attack.

Another example could be cyberextortion, which is when a cybercriminal threatens to release personal, sensitive information or data—or prevents access to personal technology—if a ransom is not paid. A personal cyberpolicy could reimburse you the ransom you paid to prevent the information from being released.

**Cyber liability insurance.** Cyberliability includes additional protection. It can cover you if you release a virus onto your computer, if you are sued for something you said online (e.g., libel) and it could



replace equipment if you become a victim of a ransomware attack.

Not all carriers offer cyber liability or personal cyber insurance. If you are interested in these coverages, contact our office and we can assist you in getting you the coverage you need.

## News from our agency

### Independence is key

Choosing to work with an independent agent is the key that will ensure your insurance fits your unique needs. Working with us is no exception—we're here for you, every step of the way.

We aspire to offer optimal service to our insureds, and you can count on us when you need to file a claim, or even when you need assurance that you, your family and your property are protected.

And, we strive to make it easy. It's our job to make sure that you have the best protection. So, go ahead and relax, enjoy every day and be confident that no matter what, we are here for you.

