



A Message from Dennis

For many people, coming to see us is like going to the dentist. (No offense intended for my dentist buddies.) People just don't like to talk about insurance, to discuss risk and, of course, let's not forget paying premiums.

Yet, like going to the dentist, most of the time it is to help prevent bad things from happening. You are doing preventative work. Preventative work, in business and insurance is known as Risk Management or Loss Prevention.

While your insurance doesn't prevent things from happening, it is pretty handy to have around when things do happen when we have accidents, fires, tornadoes, robberies, lawsuits, and now Cyber Attacks, at home and in business.

Having the right coverage is important to your financial future. So call us for a checkup. It won't hurt . . . and you won't need Novocain. I promise!

Have a great, happy, fun and SAFE summer. And remember: the best insurance is prevention

~ Dennis

How To Ruin Your Child's Financial Future

Many times we get calls to exclude a young driver from the parent's auto policy because their child is away at school. Sure, you'll save a few bucks, but what will you do when they show up unexpected and want to take the car to go to the movies or a friend's house?

And that's just your car. What if your child borrows someone's car at school? Or what if they drove home from the party because they were the sober one, and what coverage was on that car?

You spend thousands, tens of thousands of dollars sending your child to school for a better life, and then BAM! a car accident ruins their life because they were an excluded driver — that is, NO coverage.

And what about too little coverage? An accident with property damage could go well beyond the minimum limits required by law. In order to register and drive your car in Massachusetts, the state requires that you have a minimum level of certain types of auto insurance coverage. These include:

- Bodily Injury to Others: \$20,000 per person / \$40,000 per accident
- Personal Injury Protection: \$8,000 per person, per accident
- Bodily Injury Caused by an Uninsured Auto: \$20,000 per person / \$40,000 per accident
- Damage to Someone Else's Property: \$5,000 per accident

Really, folks, when you consider hospital costs, those minimums will leave you hanging. And if your adult child is responsible, the judgment could follow them for years and years.

Moral of the story — KEEP YOUR CHILD INSURED!

Cyber Hacking: Not Just Businesses Anymore

Don't sit around waiting to become a victim of cyber hacking. You can take matters into your own hands. As smart home technology continues to open up new doorways for inviting cyber attacks, your may not even be aware of the risk.

In an interview with Eric Cernak, vice president for reinsurer Munich Re America, Jacquelyn Connelly, senior editor at *Independent Agents* magazine, writes more and more people, particularly high net-worth individuals, make appealing targets for hackers and other cybercriminals.

"People aren't thinking that their refrigerator is a computer," Cernak points out. "That's what it'll come down to—people will have to start thinking about these things that they haven't thought about in the same light as their traditional computing devices."

Cernak encourages people to be selective about the smart home devices they purchase. "You're probably better off with recognized brands that have institutional power behind them," he says. "Start with a company that's serious in this game and has the wherewithal to stand by their product. If you're buying from a retailer, make sure you're not buying from the discount rack."

Jessica Groopman, independent insurance industry analyst agrees. "There's a lot to be said for the demand coming from consumers to drive this. A lot of the manufacturers I talk to about this subject know it's important, but frankly, consumers aren't asking for this. From a business model standpoint, it's not a fire under them."

Groopman goes on to say, "Think about [Cyber safety] in your purchasing decisions, prioritize the vendors that are talking about this and delivering this."

Don't make it easy. Once you've installed your smart home devices, be sure to maintain them properly. "Just like you would patch your operating system on your desktop, a lot of these things are going to get firmware patches sent to them," Cernak points out. "You need to keep on top of that and make sure you're deploying safe firmware."

Turn off unwanted features, upgraded your devices / operating systems regularly. Very often, these kinds of upgrades have embedded security augmentations into what will then be downloaded or uploaded onto your device.

When using public Wi-Fi, Cernak recommends using a virtual private network (VPN), which "helps protect you from the bad guy who might be 'surfing over your shoulder' in the unsecured Wi-Fi area."

And as cyberattacks continue to increase in mobile environments, "make sure your smartphones and tablets at a baseline have antivirus and malware software," Conroy says. "It's not 100% perfect, but it's better than nothing."

Practice good password hygiene. "The first and easiest way to protect yourself is to change your passwords," says Christie Alderman, vice president, client product and service manager at Chubb. "When you get a new device, if it allows you to change the password, change it to something complex using letters, numbers and special characters."

Keeping passwords sophisticated and updated shouldn't be a one-time practice, either—"changing passwords regularly is huge—changing passwords on multiple devices, and having different passwords on multiple devices," Groopman adds.

And double up when possible: For all devices, "if you can turn on two-factor authentication—finger-print and password or ID and pin number or something else—turn it on," Cernak advises. "It's a little bit more cumbersome, it probably takes a minute more to do something, but it's a lot more secure."

Don't go overboard. As technology becomes more and more integrated in every corner of life, "it's probably a good practice to step back and weigh the question: Does this device bring enough convenience to my life that I'm willing to give up my privacy?"

Remember: None of these measures are foolproof. "If it's built by a human, it can be hacked by a human," Cernak says. "None of these things are going to keep you absolutely secure. But it's all about raising the level effort that the bad guy has to take to get to you."

Summer Driving Hazards

As the number of motorcycles on the road increases, so does the opportunity for motorcycle crashes. There are more motorcycles on the road now than a decade ago, with the number of registered motorcycles increasing 45% between 2004 and 2013, and the number of motorcyclists more than doubling.

Make sure everyone in your family understands the unique hazards that motorcycles present, including the risk of accidents caused by a vehicle turning left in front of a motorcycle. Drivers should consider the following when sharing the road with motorcycles:

- Be extra aware: Motorcycles can be difficult to see and can disappear in your blind spot. Also, it can be easy to misjudge a motorcycle's speed.
- Look twice to make sure a motorcycle is a safe distance from your vehicle.
- Follow motorcycles at greater distances, as motorcycles can stop more quickly than automobiles.

Like motorcycles, bicycles can be difficult to see, and they can be even more vulnerable in a crash. The majority of cyclists who are injured or killed are adults, with 70% of those fatalities occurring in urban environments. Bicycle rider intentions can be hard to predict if they do not follow traffic rules or use hand signals. To keep bicyclists safe:

- Understand the local rules. Most state laws give bicycle riders the same rights as vehicle operators.
- Give bicycles space—respect their rights to use the road.
- Look for bicycle riders, especially when opening your door and making right turns at intersections. Look over your shoulder to ensure the way is clear.
- Treat bicycles the same as slow-moving vehicles. Give cyclists 3 feet of clearance when passing. When following a cyclist, give them plenty of space should they change direction or stop.

Traffic delays and detours caused by road construction can make traffic snarls worse. It is

important for drivers to be patient and alert, and to share the road. To ensure the highest safety in work zones, drivers should:

- Either avoid known work zones or anticipate the delay and allow extra time.
- Find an alternate route or adjust their work schedule to avoid hazards or delays.
- Follow signs and, if lanes are being closed, merge early before entering the work zone.
- Expect the unexpected: slow down, increase their following distance and avoid distractions.

(Source: <https://www.travelers.com/resources/driver-fleet-safety/4-summer-driving-hazards-to-be-aware-Of.aspx>)

Home Insurance Jargon Buster

Our industry is ripe with jargon. Here are some definitions to help you better understand your policy.

Additional living expenses (ALE) - Reimburses the policyholder for the cost of temporary housing, food, and other essential living expenses, if the home is damaged by a covered peril that makes the home temporarily uninhabitable. Policies cap the amount of ALE payable to 20 percent of the policy's dwelling coverage.

Declarations page - The page in a policy that shows the name and address of the insurer, the period of time a policy is in force, the amount of the premium, and the amount of coverage.

Inflation protection - Automatically adjusts your home insurance policy limits to account for increases in the costs to repair or rebuild a property.

Loss history - Refers to the number of insurance claims previously filed by a policyholder. A company will consider loss history when underwriting a new policy or considering a renewal of an existing policy. Companies view loss history as an indication of the likelihood that an insured will file a claim in the future.

Like Us on Facebook

Did you know that The McCurdy Group has a Facebook page? Each week we post a blog entry that keeps you up-to-date on various insurance topics – with some surprises thrown in. LIKE us, and you'll be well connected!

<https://www.facebook.com/McCurdyInsurance>

Dennis A. McCurdy Insurance
Agency, Inc.
212 Main Street
PO Box 531
Sturbridge, MA 01566
Phone: 508-347-9343
Fax: 508-347-5798

**PRESORTED
STANDARD**

**US Postage
PAID
Permit #25**



Download Our Mobile App!

We are excited to bring to our clients the service and convenience of the Dennis A. McCurdy Insurance Agent mobile app! The app provides you with immediate information, straight from your smartphone.

Go to Google Play or the Apple App Store and download the Dennis A. McCurdy Insurance Agent app now! Best of all, it's *free!*

