

# INSURANCE MATTERS

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## PROTECT YOUR HOME AGAINST WINTER WEATHER

Winter is on the way, bringing with it the prospect of further heavy winds and rain, frost and snow. Is your home prepared for the effects of winter weather?

Below are some common winter problems experienced by householders with guidance on how you can help to avoid them:

### Storm Damage

High winds and rain have caused considerable damage to properties in the UK in recent times. Occasionally, the damage can go unnoticed so regular checks of your property and its outbuildings for loose roof tiles and crumbling brickwork are recommended.

Don't forget your garden - check trees for signs of weakness and have those that overhang your home lopped back or removed to avoid damage from falling branches.

### Burst Pipes

One of the main causes of frozen pipes is switching off the central heating completely when the house is empty. If you're going on holiday, leave the heating on at the minimum setting and ask a friend or relative to check the house for you on a regular basis.



Other sensible precautions to take include lagging all pipes and tanks with insulation material. Further, know where your main stopcock is. If a pipe bursts, turn off your water supply and your central heating system. You can then drain the system by turning on all your cold taps.

### Blocked Drains and Gutters

Blocked gutters and drains are a major cause of water damage so ensure yours are clear of leaves, climbing plants and dirt.

### Oil Storage

The rising cost of fuel has highlighted the value of oil stored in central heating tanks. Before refilling your tank this winter, check for leaks and ensure that the tank is secure. You may also want to check that your home insurance covers the accidental loss of oil.

Use the last days of autumn to carry out maintenance checks on your property and tackle those minor problems before they turn into major ones. A little preparation could save you a lot of misery and expense.

## SAT-NAV 'MUST HAVE'

The increasingly popular satellite navigation (sat-nav) systems that are a 'must have' accessory for many drivers are fast becoming a 'must have' for car thieves as well.

Sat-navs' high street value, combined with ease of theft, has made the devices popular amongst opportunist thieves. To help protect your sat-nav from theft, you should consider:

- Removing it from the vehicle rather than putting it in the glove compartment or under your seat. Most units are small enough to fit into a jacket pocket or handbag.
- Placing a roadmap on display in the car to give the impression that you do not have a sat-nav.
- Being mindful of suction marks or a cradle on your dashboard or windscreen. An opportunist thief may risk breaking a window even if the system isn't visible.
- Marking your device using an anti-theft marking kit or with your postcode, house number or vehicle registration number. This will make resale to honest buyers more difficult.

**"SAT-NAVS ARE POPULAR WITH OPPORTUNIST THIEVES."**



## PLACE IN THE SUN

To get the right insurance for your holiday home you need to understand the assets you own, the liabilities they are exposed to and what external events may put your home at risk. If your property is overseas, local policy variations and exclusions also need to be taken into account.

### International Catastrophe Cover

Insurance cover can differ greatly from country to country. In Spain, for example, natural events such as storms, floods and earthquakes are covered by a state-backed insurance pool. The cover is, however, restricted and you could end up footing a large part of the claim yourself.

### Liability Insurance

If you rent out your property or employ domestic staff, check the extent of liability cover in place should a guest or employee be injured. Liability cover under Spanish, Portuguese and Italian policies typically provides only £200,000 of cover; this may be inadequate if a guest is seriously injured.

### Buildings & Contents Insurance

When assessing the insurance value of your property, remember that it needs to be adequate to rebuild all buildings, including outdoor structures. Consider seeking professional advice to agree the sum insured. Contents should be insured for their replacement value as new.

To avoid the misery of having your claim turned down or only paid in part, check what you assume will be covered actually is and compare policies offered locally with those offered by UK insurers specialising in overseas properties. For more information, please contact us.



## TACKLING INSURANCE FRAUD

A recent insurance study\* has identified a developing culture whereby acts of dishonesty are deemed to be increasingly acceptable by people from all walks of life and backgrounds.

Some common examples of insurance fraud are:

- The insured person has a genuine claim but exaggerates the value to receive a greater pay-out.
- Accidents and conviction details are not declared. Some do not realise that these details are held on an industry-wide database that can be checked by insurers at any time.



- A parent insures a second car in his or her name, even though the child is the main user, to avoid paying a higher insurance premium.

Unfortunately for all of us, claims costs drive future premiums and the more fraudulent claims there are, the more premiums will increase. Insurers are working hard to prevent fraud and in 2007, Norwich Union turned down 20,000 fraudulent claims worth approximately £150 million. Those who are less honest may have a rude awakening when they find out that under the terms of their insurance policy, if any part of their claim can be shown to be fraudulent, the whole claim is potentially invalid and they risk not receiving any payment at all.

\* Source: Norwich Union (2008)

\*\* Source: Association of British Insurers (ABI)

**"IN 2007, THE INSURANCE INDUSTRY LOST £1.6 BILLION\*\* AS A RESULT OF EXAGGERATED AND INVENTED INSURANCE CLAIMS."**

## IT'S A COVER UP!

As the value of your home contents goes up, has your insurance kept pace?

Here are some of the wider covers we can arrange for you:

- **Warranty free cover** – no SMALL PRINT when you make your claim.
- **Worldwide all risks cover for your personal belongings** – don't worry about limits on your travel insurance.
- **Trace and access cover** – can save you thousands of pounds tracing the source of a burst pipe and repairing the damage.
- **Funded valuation services** – make sure your high value items are fully insured.
- **No quibble claims service with cash settlement as standard** – you can choose how or indeed whether to replace your goods or if you prefer, you can leave it to the insurer to provide the replacement.

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This newsletter contains a general overview of the UK insurance market based on our understanding as insurance brokers and risk consultants. It is not intended that it be used, and should not be used, to replace specific advice relating to individual situations.

In particular, we do not offer either legal or accounting advice.

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