

Snowmelt Causes Water Damage

The snow and ice that will build up on and around your home this wintry season will not last forever. Floodsmart.gov offers the following tips to minimize water damage resulting from snowmelt:

- Avoid having snow drain next to your house. Make sure your downspouts carry water several feet from your house to a well-drained area. One foot of snow covering a 1,000-square-foot roof can produce approximately 2,500 gallons of water.

- Don't allow snow to accumulate on the ground next to your house, especially if the ground is flat. As snow melts, water



could accumulate and seep in. Relocating accumulated snow even just a few feet away from the house can help avoid a wet basement.

- If you have a sump pump, test it periodically and keep it clean from debris. Make sure the discharge hose carries the water several feet away from the house to a well-drained area. Also, to prevent the pipe from freezing, make sure it is on sloped ground to allow it to drain.

- Remove large piles of snow to a well-drained area. A 20-foot diameter, 10-foot high pile of snow contains about 2,600 gallons of water. ■

Insuring Rental Property

Are you considering converting your residence into an income-producing rental property? Doing so may be a lucrative enterprise, according to Christine Karpinski, author of the book *How to Rent Vacation Properties by Owner*, who says the average vacation rental brings in about \$30,000 a year!

If the lure of additional income has you considering placing your home or condo up for rent, be sure to give our service team a call. A property held for rent, whether full- or part-time, poses unique risks and requires special attention from your insurance company.

Many standard home insurance policies will not cover residences that are used to generate rental income. Others may include amendments that significantly reduce or eliminate coverage while the home is rented.

Is owning and managing rental property right for you? When considering the many important factors that answer this question, don't let "rental property insurance" slip through the cracks! Give our service team a call. We can help you determine the cost of adequately insuring your property as a rental. ■

Destroyed in Transit

We've all been there. We head to the furniture or electronics store, see something we can't live without, make the purchase and then ask ourselves, "How the heck are we going to get this thing home?"

We ask a friend or a neighbor with a pickup to help, and they do. Unfortunately, while the sofa or big screen is in transit, it comes loose, bangs around the pickup's bed or falls into the road. The item is damaged beyond repair.

In this situation, would any insurance policy pay to fix the damaged item? First, the bad news: Provisions in the standard auto insurance policy prevent your friend's vehicle insurance from paying to replace property damaged while

being transported, even if it was your friend's negligence (erratic driving, failing to adequately secure the item, etc.) that caused the damage.



The good news is that your home insurance policy should apply. Most home insurance policies cover owned personal property while anywhere in the world.

That said, the last thing you want is for a new item to become an insurance claim before you get it home! Make sure your valuable items are placed only in the care of trustworthy drivers. If possible, rely only on friends who have experience moving large items and have the equipment necessary to adequately secure the item in the vehicle. Arrange for the transportation of the item during non-peak driving hours and use a pre-planned route with which the driver is familiar. And don't drive the vehicle yourself if you are unfamiliar with it.

For more information on the interplay between automobile and home insurance, call our service team today. ■

Personal Articles Floater

Many people know that valuable items like jewelry and art collections are usually insured separately from other property typically covered under a standard home insurance policy. But did you know that separate policies for specific items such as these, often called a personal articles floater, are not just for expensive items?

A personal articles floater is designed to extend better insurance coverage for items that need to be scheduled separately to avoid running into a pre-determined sub-limit on a home insurance policy. In addition to jewelry and fine arts, the floater can also cover unique items such as a stamp or coin collection or a

model railroad. Portable property, such as cameras and video equipment, may be scheduled along with fragile or hard-to-find articles like statuary, sports memorabilia or vintage wine.

Most personal articles floaters are designed to protect your property on an "open-perils" basis.

In addition to restrictive sub-limits, most home insurance policies limit personal property coverage to a named-peril basis, meaning if the cause of the loss to property is not specifically listed in the policy, there is no coverage. In contrast,

most personal articles floaters are designed to protect your property on an "open-perils" basis, meaning all losses are covered unless specifically excluded.

For example, if you lose a ring in the lake while boating, most home insurance policies will not pay to replace it because there is no peril listed to provide coverage. If the ring were insured on a personal articles floater, the loss would be covered unless the policy specifically describes that event as one that eliminates coverage.

For more information on a personal articles floater for your property, call our service team today. ■

Motorcycles Have Separate Needs

Motorcycles are not covered by your standard auto insurance policy. The Florida Department of Financial Services and the National Association of Insurance Commissioners have provided the following information on the issue.

- You must have a separate policy that covers liability, no-fault personal injury protection (if required by your state's law) and, depending on the value of the motorcycle, comprehensive and collision coverage (collectively called "physical damage"). If your motorcycle is financed, your lender will likely require you to carry physical damage coverage.

- The premium for your policy will partially depend on the motorcycle's engine size, its age and how often you ride. Keep in mind that scooters operated by you or family members may also require separate insurance.

- Insurance companies have separate requirements for helmets. Be sure you understand your state



law and that you have read and understand your policy's requirements regarding helmet use. If you have specific questions, contact your state insurance department and the insurance department of any state in which you ride. You can link to state insurance department websites by visiting www.naic.org/state_web_map.htm.

If you carry seasonal coverage on your motorcycle, which allows you to eliminate liability and perhaps collision coverage in the winter months if you do not ride, check to make sure your policy is up to date and that you have a current insurance card before riding again when the weather starts to change. ■

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Flood Tips

Floodsmart.gov, the official website of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), reminds homeowners that approximately one in four flood insurance claims comes from low- to moderate-risk areas.

Concerned homeowners should consider the following suggestions from Floodsmart.gov:

- Look into federal flood insurance in your community. This insurance is backed by the NFIP, which is part of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Remember that most home insurance policies do not cover flood damage.
- Keep your important documents and precious possessions safe by storing them in the upper levels of your home or in off-site storage.
- If possible, raise furnaces, water heaters and other appliances at least 12 inches above your home's expected flood level.
- Create a personal action plan today. Know what to do with family members, pets and important documents/possessions before the water rises. ■

Thank you for your referrals.

If you're pleased with us, spread the word! We will be happy to give the same great service to all of your friends and business associates.