



YES, YOU CAN BUY FLOOD INSURANCE...

LAFAYETTE, Ind. -- "I didn't realize I could get flood insurance" is an all-too-familiar statement to FEMA's Mike Klitzke. "I have literally heard uninsured disaster victims say the same thing on every flood I have ever worked," said Klitzke, an expert on the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). "Sadly those people have almost always been misinformed."



In the case of the Indiana counties affected in the recent presidential disaster, flood insurance was/is available for most residents - before, during and after the flood.

The NFIP is a federal program administered by FEMA, but policies are sold by neighborhood insurance agents. With very few exceptions (those are in coastal barrier areas), it is available to most people living in a community that participates in the National Flood Insurance Program, including renters and condo owners. Even people living in low-to-moderate flood risk areas are advised to have flood insurance because almost 25 percent of NFIP claims come from outside high-flood-risk areas.

Officials stress that FEMA can only offer financial assistance to

victims in the event of a presidential disaster declaration. The majority of floods are not extensive enough to warrant such a declaration. An NFIP flood policy pays off whether there is a declaration or not. With the average cost of a policy around \$400, a year's worth of flood insurance can be less expensive than one month's car payment.

www.fema.gov, Release Number: 1740-015, February 22, 2008

The Sylvia Group of Insurance Agencies can help you determine if Flood Insurance is available to you and let you know what the cost would be. Call our office today to speak with one of our Account Managers for a quote.

PREVENTING WATER DAMAGE...

Leaks can drive homeowners and commercial building owners up the wall. Luckily, the source of most leaks can be located and fixed with a little patience and persistence. There are four simple ways to prevent your home or building from being damaged by water. They include proper grading, installing and maintaining gutters and downspouts, reducing the amount of irrigation near your foundation and a properly functioning drainage system.

Proper Grading

This is a preventative measure against water seeping into the foundation and causing water damage. The grade should be enough to keep the water running in the right direction, which is away from the building. For best results, the grade should be done for a minimum distance of 3 ft. from the foundation.

Irrigation

Another means of managing water is to reduce the amount of irrigation near the foundation of your building. You can do this by minimizing vegetation that is close to the foundation walls. Any and all vegetation that remains should be watered with drip irrigation rather than sprinklers that shed water over a vast area.

Gutters and Downspouts

If your home or building has gutters and downspouts, check to see what condition they are in. If you notice that they are leaking or clogged with debris, clean & repair them. All you will need to clean & repair them with is a garden hose with a high-pressure spout along with a high-quality caulking compound.

Drainage System

A footing drainage system (French drain) is another option as well. It collects subsurface water and relieves hydrostatic pressure. It is located at the base of the footing at the perimeter of the building. Installing a French drain is a project best left to a professional.

NEW AUTO INSURANCE SYSTEM

The Massachusetts auto insurance system is changing for consumers who buy or renew their insurance policies on or after April 1, 2008. Governor Patrick and the Division of Insurance have reviewed and accepted new submitted rates from the Insurance Companies. This new system is called "Managed Competition," which means that insurers will have more flexibility on rating insurance coverage and price. After April 1, 2008, companies will charge consumers different rates and calculate premiums based on factors that were not used in the past. As a result, some people will be charged more, others less, and each insurance company may offer you a different price. Because of the wider array of prices and coverages, consumers insuring their automobile on or after April 1, 2008, should shop carefully for auto insurance.

Since the filing of the new rates last November, we have been asked multiple questions on what to expect and how customers can ensure they are getting the best rate and coverage. Below are a few answers to the most frequently asked questions:

1) Will I be able to cancel my policy ahead of my policy expiration date in order to take advantage of the new rates?

A: You can cancel your existing policy after April 1, 2008 and sign up for a new policy under the new Managed Competition system. However, there are a few key points to remember before backing out of your current policy.

- You should make sure the new policy provides the coverages you are looking for and that you know exactly how much the new policy will cost.
- You should be aware that if you cancel your policy after the first 30 days of the start date, you could be charged a penalty of 10%.
- Many auto policies are linked to homeowners policies. Therefore, if one policy is canceled and moved to another company, then the account credit that you are receiving for carrying both policies with one company may be lost. (*Homeowner carrier may also make auto coverage a requirement of insuring your home.*)

We are recommending that customers wait until their renewal date to take advantage of the new system. Due to the many rating factors, we can not guarantee that policy premiums will go down or up. Every person's situation is unique. Insurance companies are also refile their rates as they adjust to the competition. When the time is right for you, we will gladly shop around for you to make sure you are getting the best coverage for the best rate.

2) Are there new coverages and discounts available with the new reform?

A: Yes, there are many new endorsements and discounts that vary from company to company. Sylvia Insurance works with over 6 auto insurance carriers so we are able to get pricing and endorsement options to best fit your needs. Some of the endorsements and discounts available are:

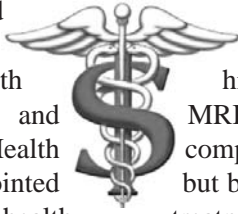
Some of the Policy Discounts Available

- Account Credit
- Advanced Driver Training
- Annual Mileage
- Antique Autos
- Anti-Theft
- Class 15 (65+)
- Dartmouth School District Employees & Town of Dartmouth
- Driving Experience
- Driver Training
- Excellent Driver Discounts (SDIP points)
- Good Student
- Hybrid Vehicle
- Motorcycle Rider Training Program
- Multi-Car
- Multi-Policy
- New Business
- Passive Restraints
- Public Transportation
- Renewal Credit
- Student Away at School

Some of the New Endorsements Available

- AAA Member Package
- Accident Forgiveness
- Actual Replacement Cost
- Deductible Rewards
- Disappearing Deductible
- OEM Auto Parts
- Loan/Lease Gap Coverage
- Extended Rental Coverage
- Enhanced Towing and Labor Coverage
- Trip Interruption Coverage

Many people expected to find affordable insurance options with the passage of health care reform in Massachusetts and the establishment of the new Health Connector, only to be disappointed and frustrated to see that the health plans in the Connector are far from what most of us would consider 'affordable'. One thing to keep in mind as we move forward with the implementation of health care reform in our state is that we will not be able to reduce the cost of health insurance until we address the cost of health care.



and alternative methods of treatment and diagnosis before purchasing that high cost prescription or scheduling an MRI, etc. This is not to say that you should compromise your health in the process, but become involved in the course of your treatment.

In the meantime, there are more choices in health insurance coverage today as a result of health care reform. More choices often lead to more confusion, so be sure to call on your trusted advisors at the Sylvania Group to assist you in finding the best option to balance your financial and coverage needs. We can help you determine if you are eligible for free or subsidized state insurance plans through Commonwealth Care, options for Young Adults, individual non-subsidized plans, or help you establish employer-sponsored plans, whether you are self-employed or part of a large corporation.

Please feel free to call our Financial Services & Benefits Department at (508) 995-4553 if you have any questions regarding health insurance.

We all are shareholders in the future of health care – we must start taking better care of ourselves, follow our doctors' recommendations to prevent any decline in our health, and start asking whether there are less costly options in testing and treatment, including prescriptions, non-surgical options, etc. With the trend in increasing copays and deductibles for health care under our insurance plans, people are starting to understand the need to become health care consumers, asking about costs

STOCK MARKET VOLATILITY, WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Global stock markets have recently been among the most volatile in history. Problems in the housing and credit markets and their potential impact on U.S. economic growth will likely continue to cause volatility in the equity markets over the near term. How long will this last? Time will tell. Now, more than ever, it is important to pay attention to some basic investment fundamentals. Review your investment portfolio and answer the following questions:

- Are you investing with a purpose? Is your investment strategy appropriate relative to your objectives and time horizon?
- Are your investments properly allocated and well diversified? Do you have a healthy diet of different types of investments in the appropriate proportions relative to your goals and risk tolerance?
- When was the last time your investments have been rebalanced?

- Have you let market performance or lack thereof take you off course?
- Are you investing in the most tax efficient way?
- Are you losing money in your investments because of poor security selection or sub-par mutual fund management?

Investing can be much less stressful with clear goals. A sound, well diversified, risk-appropriate investment strategy; one which utilizes appropriate, well-selected investments. It is easy to ignore the basics when you are making money and it is easy to panic when you are not. Regular review of your portfolio, regardless of its short term performance, is critical to long term investment success.

If you would like a free review of your current investments call Sylvania Financial at 508-995-4080.

The Sylvania Group is pleased to announce the appointment of **LaShauna Barboza** to the position of Account Executive. Shauna is a graduate of Tabor Academy and Amherst College where she received her Bachelor of Arts Degree with a major in Black Studies and was a captain of the women's basketball team. She will be working to develop new accounts for the Agency while focusing on the high level of service we bring to new and existing customers. Shauna joins us after working as a rental branch manager for Enterprise Rent-A-Car, managing two branches and consistently performing in the top quarter of her company. She looks forward to continuing to work with customers to provide a high level of service while ensuring they have the coverage and protection they need. Shauna resides in New Bedford and enjoys basketball and volunteering for community groups such as the United Way.

Our Financial Services and Benefits Account Manager, Rose Soares, recently received the designation of a Registered Employee Benefits Consultant (REBC). This is a professional designation for employee benefits professionals granted by The American College (Bryn Mawr, PA) to individuals who have proven themselves to be: educated, qualified, experienced, ethical and knowledgeable in the benefits industry. The Sylvania Group congratulates Rose on her accomplishment and drive to better serve our clients.

JURY DUTY SCAM. PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST IDENTITY THEFT.

Massachusetts jury commissioner Pamela J. Wood warns residents that if they ever get a phone call from someone telling them they have been summoned for jury duty, then asks for personal information, don't give it to them. "We would never contact anyone by phone. That's your tip-off right there that it's a scam," said Pamela J. Wood.

The jury scam is the latest attempt in identity theft, in which con artists use ruses and threats to get unwitting victims to cough up data that can be used to tap into bank accounts and other financial assets. This scam preys on public fears of missing jury

service obligations, which state officials resolve by mail.

The scam has also surfaced in Arizona, Oregon, Washington, Ohio, Georgia, Connecticut, New York, California, Colorado, and Missouri, according to the National Center for State Courts.

Wood said Massachusetts officials started hearing of the scam in early 2007. "We were getting calls from people who were being accused on the phone of missing jury duty," Wood said. "We knew immediately what was going on."

If you receive any suspicious phone

calls from individuals that are questioning you about your jury duty service, please report the call to the state attorney general consumer hot line at (617) 727-8400.

Wood said anyone duped into giving personal data should immediately file a police report and notify their bank and the three major credit reporting services.

Mishra, Raja, Jury scam asks victims' personal ID. Boston.com, February 13, 2007

Identity Theft coverage may be available as an endorsement on your homeowners policy or as a commercial group policy for employees. For more information, call our Account Managers at (508) 995-4553.

Expanding Our Service To You

The Sylvia Group would like to announce the implementation of CSR 24/7.

CSR 24/7 provides our customers the ability to receive extended customer service beyond our office hours. Currently, CSR 24/7 is available via the telephone and we will soon be offering access through our internet site. Some of the services that CSR 24/7 provides are:

- Request Changes to Your Policies (*Telephone & Internet*)
 - *Add/Delete Drivers*
 - *Add/Delete Vehicles*
- Request a Certificate of Insurance (*Internet only*)
- Initiate First Reports of Losses (*Telephone & Internet*)
- Email or Submit Questions/Comments (*Telephone & Internet*)



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