

COVID-19 – HOME & AUTO INSURANCE FAQ

We are all experiencing a new way of life. One that involves social distancing, social isolation and frequent handwashing. Experiences that once seemed so mundane, like going to the grocery store can now seem fraught with peril. May you live in interesting times...

COVID-19 also raises questions with regard to your home insurance. Here are some answers and guidelines with respect to frequently asked questions.

- **I'm working from home. Does this affect my home insurance?** Many Canadians are now working from home as a result of COVID-19 and social distancing measures. If you are doing office work at home involving the use of a computer, tablet, or phone, you will generally not need to notify your insurance broker. However, if working from home involves other elements, such as an increase of visitors, you should let us know as this may require alternate coverage and affect your insurance.
- **Is my work equipment covered by my home insurance policy?** If the work equipment is owned by you, and has already been added to your policy, then it would be covered for risks such as theft or damage by fire. However, if your employer provides your work equipment, you should consult with your employer, who can advise how work equipment is covered.
- **I'm self-isolating away from my home or unable to come back to Canada from abroad. Is my home still covered in this situation?** It is advisable that you refer to your policy wording or contact your broker for confirmation regarding this question. Coverage and conditions can vary. For example, there is a difference between a home that is temporarily unoccupied versus a home that is now vacant (resident does not intend to return) as well requirements to maintain amenities such as adequate heating to avoid potential water damage from freezing. Your policy will dictate your responsibilities when you are away. Your broker can assist you with understanding your obligations under your policy.
- **My seasonal or secondary residence is currently being unused and I don't know when I will be visiting it due to the pandemic. Am I in danger of voiding coverage if it is unoccupied for a longer period of time than normal?** Under normal circumstances, most insurers require that seasonal or secondary residences be visited with a frequency designated in the policy wording. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some insurers may be willing to waive this stipulation. Please contact your broker so that we verify coverage under this circumstance.
- **Someone in my home recently tested positive for COVID-19. Does my home insurance cover the cost to deep clean my house once they have recovered?** No, home insurance will not cover this.
- **Due to self-isolation, I expect to be home much more than usual. Do I have to notify my insurance broker of this?** No, being home more does not require you to contact your insurance broker.

AUTO INSURANCE REFUNDS

Following the lead of private sector insurers such as Allstate, Aviva, Pafco and Desjardins, Manitoba Public Insurance announced on April 23 that it will be mailing out cheques amounting to about 11 per cent of policy-holder premiums or an average of \$140 to \$160 per rebate toward the end of May or early June (source Winnipeg Free Press). Another article in the Winnipeg Free Press on April 7 reported that MPI received 4,108 fewer claims in March compared to the same period last year. Total savings for the period March 15 to April 15 alone amounted to about \$29 million.

The total amount to be returned to Manitobans is \$110 million. MPI can return \$50 million under current legislation and will have to go to the Public Utilities Board for approval to return the remaining \$60 million.

What can you do?

You could also consider switching your vehicle coverage from All Purpose to Pleasure, but there is a \$15 policy change fee each time coverage is amended, so \$15 to change to Pleasure and then another \$15 to change it back to All Purpose when you need full coverage again. The savings may not be that significant, especially if it is only for a short period of time. You can check with your broker for further details. Where is that crystal ball when you need it?

Pamela Pyke, Vice President
Marsh Canada Limited