

Coverage Corner

It is great to be back after a brief summer hiatus and I am ready to get back into the swing of things. I have chosen a hot topic in the insurance world and a buzz word I hear kicking around with lots of different groups that I spend time with. This month I am going to address Identity Theft.

Statistically 27,000 people per day are victims and they incur an average loss cost of \$4,800. As a matter of fact my information was compromised a few months ago when the TJ Max/Marshalls corporation computer system was hacked. I then began to self monitor my credit and pay attention to the balance on my credit card.

There are a two main places where you can get the ID Theft Coverage. First, from your credit cards and secondly most homeowner carriers offer and endorsement. I prefer the endorsement to the homeowner method for a couple of reasons. First it is more broad than using you credit card. For example, what if card "A" has coverage and card "B" does not and card "B" is compromised? Well, you are out of luck whereas if you had it on your home all avenues are covered. One of the most common scams going is that the crook will take the credit card offer from your mailbox fill it out for you and send it in. They will then check your mail box until it arrives then take it and they have "your" card. If they did not choose to activate the ID fraud protection you will be on your own unless you have it on your homeowners policy.

Most homeowner policy endorsements cover the expense incurred to regain your identity and to get your credit straightened out. They just cover the expense because most companies waive the charges once it is known to be an ID fraud case.

The covered expenses are things like:

1. Loss of income for time off work needed to get this worked out.
2. Loan application or reapplication fees.
3. Legal fees and/or credit agency fees to defend lawsuits, remove criminal and civil judgments from your record and challenge the accuracy or completeness of your credit report.
4. Cost to notarize affidavits and reproducing items.
5. Certified mail costs.
6. Long distance phone bills.
7. Daycare or elder care expenses.

Most carrier also offer ID recovery units to help you along the way if you do have a claim. This will save you a lot of time and as we all know time is money.

Here are a couple of easy steps you can take to try to keep yourself safe from ID theft.

1. Call or go online to one of the three major credit agencies and tell them to turn off all credit card offers.
 - a. TransUnion.com
 - b. Equifax.com
 - c. Experian.com
2. You can place fraud alerts with the major credit reporting agencies
3. Enroll in credit monitoring services.
4. Do not give out you information over the phone, ever!
5. If you are shopping on-line (which if you are hopefully you looked locally first) be sure the web site you are on is HTTPS and not just HTTP. The S stands for secure, if it is not there and you have spyware on your computer people can watch our record every one of your keystrokes. This means they have you card numbers pin's and passwords.

None of these things will keep 100% secure but a proactive stance is a must in this electronic world.

Most companies offer between \$10,000 and \$20,000 dollars worth of coverage and here is the kicker most collect \$15-\$25 **annully** for this endorsement. This endorsement is a no brainer so if you are not sure if you have it pick up the phone and call your local independent insurance agent right now.

Thank you for reading and participating and remember “don’t be cornered by your coverage.”

This column is strictly for general insurance information please consult your local agent for the specifics of your insurance program.

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