

August 2011

INSURANCE *Tips*

## Free help with your insurance questions or complaints

Consumer Advocacy  
Hotline

Toll-free  
1-888-877-4894

Salem  
503-947-7984

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**Insurance Division**  
350 Winter St. NE  
P.O. Box 14480  
Salem, OR 97309-0405

Phone: 503-947-7980  
Fax: 503-378-4351  
Web: [insurance.oregon.gov](http://insurance.oregon.gov)



Many college students will head off to school with thousands of dollars worth of electronics and other personal items — everything from computers to bicycles. What happens if these items are damaged or stolen? If your student becomes ill while

away from home, will their care be covered? And, what happens to your auto insurance rates when college enters the picture?

In other words, is insurance on the back-to-school checklist? Here are some issues you may want to discuss with your insurance agent or company.



## Health insurance

- ▶ Can my student remain on our family health insurance plan? Most health insurance policies now cover dependents until the age of 26, regardless of whether they are students or married.
- ▶ If this isn't an option, you can research an individual policy. These are available to people who don't get group coverage through an employer. Contact insurance companies directly or an agent can help. Prices are based largely on benefits selected and age.
- ▶ Many colleges and universities offer student health plans, but they vary in benefits. Make sure you understand any benefit limits or exclusions, especially if you are considering this for a student's only coverage.
- ▶ If your student is headed out of town, your health insurance company may not cover nonemergency care or may charge more for out-of-network doctors and hospitals. Talk to your insurance company about your situation.

## Personal items

- ▶ Will your homeowners policy cover computers, bicycles, and any other personal items that might be damaged or stolen? If so, you may want to ask your agent how much you will pay out of your pocket to meet the deductible. Is renters insurance a better option?



- ▶ If your student is living off campus, does your homeowner coverage extend to the rental property? If not, consider renters insurance. It is relatively inexpensive — averaging less than \$14 a month in Oregon. Renters insurance not only covers personal belongings, but also personal liability for damage to the property of others and for bodily injury to someone else from a covered loss at either the rental property or elsewhere off site.

- ▶ Renters insurance usually covers the insured (your student) or any relative that lives with them. If your student lives with nonrelative roommates, each of them would need their own renters insurance policy to cover personal belongings and personal liability.
- ▶ Renters insurance normally also includes coverage to pay for loss of use if the apartment or rental dwelling becomes uninhabitable due to a covered loss. Additional living expense would also be included to help move your student to a new location, pay necessary deposits, and moving or storage charges. Some policies limit this to a set amount of time, such as 12 months, and some have a set dollar limit.
- ▶ If your student has a lot of unusually valuable items, consider adding a personal articles policy to cover them.

## Auto insurance

- ▶ College students are generally covered under their parents' auto insurance policy, especially if the student's primary address is the parents' residence.
- ▶ If your student is driving the vehicle at school, rates may change due to the new location and the use of the vehicle. If your student is not taking a car, check to see if your company offers rate credit on your automobile premium. With most companies, the determining factor will be how far away the school is from your home.
- ▶ It is important to communicate with your agent or insurance company and share your student's situation with them. Document the information and confirm it in writing to avoid surprises due to miscommunication.

## Inventory

- ▶ It's a good idea to make a list of your student's possessions, including the purchase price, and model and serial numbers of major items. It also helps to keep receipts of these items. This will help you decide how much renters insurance your student will need — and help if your student needs to file an insurance claim. Take photos or video of the possessions, and store the inventory in a secure location. Parents should keep a copy.

## Credit

- ▶ Remind your college students to use their credit cards wisely. Most auto and homeowner insurers look at insurance scores, which use credit histories, in setting premiums. Having good credit will pay off for years to come.