



Newsletter

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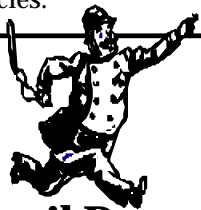
Tougher Laws on Identity Theft

President Bush signed legislation that toughens penalties against identity theft, a problem that federal officials estimate cost U.S. consumers and businesses over \$50 billion last year. In a White House Roosevelt Room ceremony, Bush put his signature on the Identity Theft Penalty Enhancement Act, which he said “sends a clear message that a person who violates another’s financial privacy will be punished.”

The new law creates a separate crime of “aggravated identity theft” for any person who uses the identity of another person to commit a terrorist act, to commit wire fraud, to steal a passport or visa, or other serious crimes. It also expands the maximum penalty for identity theft under federal law from three to five years, and it clarifies that the 25-year maximum sentence for identity theft in facilitating terrorism applies to both international and domestic terrorism.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein, a California Democrat who co-sponsored the legislation, said the law will make it easier for prosecutors to target identity thieves who steal for the purpose of committing the most serious crimes, including terrorism. “Identity theft has reached epidemic proportions in recent years,” Feinstein said. “This legislation will give prosecutors a leg up in the fight against identity theft. It will particularly help in those cases where criminals use stolen identities to commit acts of terrorism, murder, and other serious crimes.”

Our companies offer insurance to cover your expenses, as the result of Identity Theft. Coverage includes credit theft, and expenses for copies, mail, and loss of work and attorney fees. The cost is about \$25.00 per year. Call us if you are interested in such an endorsement to your homeowner, renter or condominium policies.



E-mail Dangers

- If you receive an e-mail informing that you won something, be suspicious. The old adage, “If it looks too good to be true, it probably is,” applies here.
- No company will pay you to forward their e-mail to everyone in your address book. Don’t fall for such schemes.
- E-mails warning you of a “new and very destructive virus” that will wipe out your

hard drive are often fake. Some will even prompt you to delete a file in Windows.

- If you receive an e-mail with an attachment from someone you do not know or did not request information from, why in the world would you blindly open the attachment? This is the most common way to spread viruses. Most viruses (with the exception of some newer Web page-imbedded code) cannot harm your PC unless you execute a file (i.e., the attachment). Don’t let curiosity “kill the cat.”
- Never give out your personal information in an e-mail. If you receive an e-mail from what looks to be a

credit card company or eBay telling you your account will be suspended unless you “verify” your information, immediately delete it. (Does “identity theft” ring a bell?)

- When you receive spam mail, sometimes there will be an “unsubscribe” link. It will tell you that if you no longer wish to receive e-mails, simply click on the link and “unsubscribe.” Unless you initially subscribed, this only will serve to let the offending sender know that yours is a valid e-mail address. In turn, they might sell your address to every spammer across the globe. If they do, get ready for a flood of spam mail.

Special

Holiday Office Hours

Closed Friday December 24 and Saturday December 25. In addition the office will be closed Friday, December 31 and Saturday, January 1.

Rental Car Insurance

If you’re one of the many Americans taking a vacation soon, there’s a good chance you’ll be renting a car to tote around the family. When you’re at the rental car counter, you’ll be faced with the age-old question — to purchase or not to purchase insurance? What many drivers may not know is that they already have insurance for their rental car.

If you return the rental car after an accident, you may be responsible for out of pocket costs, but if you already have car insurance with your own car, it probably also extends to your rental car. However, the amount of coverage on the rental car depends on your policy and whether you have liability, comprehensive, collision or another type of coverage — so be sure you review your auto insurance policy with us before renting.

However, if you get into a fender bender while driving a rental car, you’d still be required to pay the deductible - on your own car insurance. That’s why some drivers opt to take the rental car insurance coverage from the rental company anyway.

New Study: Young Women & Fast Driving



Common wisdom has it reportedly that it's the young men who are the fast drivers. Not anymore, reveals a national survey from The Hartford Financial Services Group.

"Our culture traditionally has associated young men with fast cars and fast driving," said George Thacker, senior vice president, personal lines marketing at The Hartford. "But that appears to be changing. Results from our recent survey of American drivers show that young women are literally leaving their male counterparts in the dust, and unfortunately, they're also getting into more accidents."

The survey reportedly found that 56 percent of women between the ages of 18 and 24 think it's acceptable to drive 10 mph over the speed limit on highways, compared to 46 percent of their male counterparts. And although the majority of young women and young men think it's not acceptable to speed on local roads, more young women (21 percent) say it's okay to speed than young men (13 percent).

"When it comes to driving, young women definitely appear to be living more dangerously, and like the male hot rodder of the past, they're suffering more of the

consequences," said Thacker. "Forty-five percent of young women report being in an accident in the past three years, compared to 33 percent of young male drivers."

Thacker noted an interesting incongruity revealed by the survey: that even though young men are speeding less, they're getting more tickets than young women drivers. Forty-eight percent of young men have received a speeding ticket, compared to 37 percent of young women.

"The good news is that when it comes to obeying common rules of the road, young women tend to drive more cautiously than young men," continued Thacker. "They're more likely than their male counterparts to reduce speed when roads are wet, to avoid passing vehicles on the right and to stop when a school bus has yellow lights flashing.

"Young drivers need to be reminded of all the benefits of safe driving, including the financial ones. Fast driving, obviously, threatens safety and can cause accidents, but it also can drive up insurance costs. Parents with teenagers who are good drivers will want to make sure their premium accurately reflects the driving record and risk of each driver on their insurance policy."

Did You Know?

The top three contributors to teen auto crashes are inexperience, speeding and distractions such as cell phones



Chris Betts with the President of Westfield Insurance Co., Roger McManus.

Padgett-Young Agent Receives Westfield Insurance Award

Chris Betts was recognized for 25 years of professionalism and service excellence, representing Westfield Insurance. A leading independent insurance agent, Chris Betts has represented Westfield since 1979.

"Westfield Insurance is represented by independent agents who are carefully selected for their commitment to providing clients with the best insurance advice and service. For a quarter century, Betts has teamed with Westfield to deliver on our promise of protection. We are proud to honor him on this service milestone," said Westfield Insurance President, Roger McManus.

Ohio Medical Malpractice Commission Meets for 18th Time

The Ohio Medical Malpractice Commission held its 18th meeting on November 18, 2004. The commission will hear testimony regarding the feasibility of a patient compensation fund, the effectiveness of medical malpractice caps and the effect of tort reform on plaintiffs. Medical malpractice insurance providers from California and Colorado will also address the commission regarding the impact of premium-lowering measures implemented in their respective states.

The commission is chaired by Ohio Department of Insurance Director Ann Womer Benjamin and is composed of doctors, lawyers and hospital representatives. Minutes of previous meetings as well as the commission's interim report can be reviewed on Ohio Department of Insurance website:

<http://www.ohioinsurance.gov/agent/medmalcommission.htm>.



Westfield Agency Claims Service Award

On June 21, 2004 our claims staff was presented a claims award for the past year. Pictured from left to right: Christy Barnes, Michele Filous, Renee Terhorst and Gerry Davis, Claims Manager for Westfield's Medina Office.

We are proud of our customer service staff. They try hard to exceed your expectations. If you ever wonder about a coverage or claim, call us. We will get you an answer.

Malpractice Crisis Hurting Ohio Doctors

Patients in southeastern and northeastern Ohio are feeling the impact of the medical malpractice crisis according to several doctors who testified before the Ohio Medical Malpractice Commission at the Ohio Department of Insurance (ODI). Recruitment and retention efforts at some independent and university hospitals in those regions are suffering, as new doctors leave Ohio for more favorable medical liability premiums in other states, ODI said in a statement.

Statistics cited in testimony before the commission showed that certain specialties, including obstetrician-gynecologists, have been hit particularly hard by the crisis. According to Dr. John A. Brose, dean of Ohio University College of Osteopathic Medicine, all five family physicians stopped delivering babies, one gynecologist left and two out of the three remaining surgeons in the Athens community in southeastern Ohio left since last year. Additionally, Brose testified that surgery for Medicaid patients is unavailable in the area for non-emergent care.

Dr. James Dougherty, head of the medical education department at Akron General Hospital, testified that his hospital and other Akron-area hospitals are not only finding it difficult to recruit new doctors to practice in northeast Ohio, but retaining resident physicians is increasingly a challenge. According to Dougherty, only 43% (27% for Akron General) of residents now stay in northeast Ohio to practice medicine where 63% stayed in the area in 2002.

The commission was created under Senate Bill 281 of the 124th General Assembly, the law that established caps on noneconomic damages in medical malpractice cases.

Special Holiday Office Hours- closed Friday December 24 and Saturday December 25. In addition the office will be closed Friday, December 31 and Saturday, January 1.

45th Anniversary

Please join us in congratulating our associate, Jerry Linnen who is enjoying his 45th anniversary year in the Life Insurance industry.

We, at Padgett-Young are pleased to say several hundred of our customers know first hand of Jerry's dedication and service to their life insurance planning needs.

He joined our Agency nearly eight years ago following more than 30 years with the Westfield Companies in Westfield Center. He spent his entire Westfield career in the life insurance company, starting as a Field Representative in Ft. Wayne, Indiana and retiring as Group Vice President with responsibility for the entire company.

During the past 45 years he has continued his formal education attaining both a CLU (Chartered Life Underwriter) as well as the ChFC (Chartered Financial Consultant) designations from the American College, Bryn Mawr, Pa.

Various life insurance companies have recognized Jerry's professional competence and expertise in recent years at principal meetings in Quebec City, Canada, London, England, Berne, Switzerland as well as Annual Meetings in the USA.

We are proud of Jerry's accomplishments on behalf of Padgett- Young and encourage you to contact our office in either Lodi or Wadsworth to arrange a consultation with him to discuss existing policies, proper beneficiary, designations, ownership or generally how your plans measure up in today's world. He is an independent agent representing the most highly rated companies worldwide specializing in both personal and business life insurance, Long Term Care, Annuities and Disability Income Insurance.

On a personal note Jerry and his wife Joan live in Westfield Center, they have four grown children and eleven grandchildren; he attended Kent State University and served in the Marine Corps prior to entering the insurance business in 1960.

Jerry is a member of the Society of Financial Service Professionals, National Association of Insurance and Financial Advisors and the prestigious Million Dollar Round Table and he is here to serve you.

Westfield '05 Calendar

Enclosed is Westfield's new calendar for 2005. We hope you enjoy the calendar and find it useful.

Westfield has an annual contest for their policy holders to submit photos to appear on the company's calendar. Two of our friends and clients photos made the cut this year.

Richard Edington of Westfield Center won for October with a photo of Blue Hen Falls, Cuyahoga Valley National Park, Ohio.

Larry Black was pastor of a local church in our area. He was transferred to the Dover area to take over another church. Reverend Black was a good friend and client. We will miss him. He won the May selection with a photo of Sprague Lake, Rocky Mountain National Park.



Health Insurance Costs Rise Faster Than Wages

Health insurance premiums for workers are rising around three times faster than their wages, and health costs eat up a quarter of earnings for more than 14 million Americans, according to a recent survey. The report from the nonprofit Families USA found that the cost of health insurance premiums rose by nearly 36% on average from 2000 to 2004 in 35 states, said the group, which bills itself as a nonpartisan watchdog on health care issues. Average earnings rose just 12% over the same time.

"Family health premiums paid by employers and workers rose from \$7,028 in 2000 to \$9,320 in 2004. The average amount paid by workers for this coverage rose from \$1,433 to \$1,947 during that period -- an increase of 35.9%," the group said in a statement.

More than 60 % of Americans get their health insurance through an employer, according to Census Bureau statistics. The number of people without insurance rose last year from 43 million to 45 million and some experts say rising insurance costs are in part to blame.

For the report Families USA used data compiled and analyzed by The Lewin Group from the U.S. Census Bureau, the Department of Labor, and the Department of Health and Human Services

Water Emergencies

When pipes burst, fixtures leak, or appliances cause a flood, stop the deluge by cutting off the water at its source.

Take a moment to locate all of the shutoff valves in your home so you'll be prepared for an emergency — the following can serve as your guide.

Whole-house shutoff. For a home served by a well, the shutoff will be on the house side of the pressure tank. You should also cut power to the pump so it doesn't detect a phantom pressure loss and burn out. In a home with metered water, look for the shutoff on either side of the water meter.

Remember, your meter could be located in the basement, mounted on an exterior wall, or even out near the street in a concrete "meter pit" where the household feed line meets the utility main.

Whole-house hot-water shutoff. On your water heater there should be a valve on the hot-water outlet, which controls all of the hot water to the house. If there isn't one on yours, you or your plumber should install one.

Toilet shutoff. Look for this in-line shutoff — typically a ribbed oval handle — under the toilet tank.

Sink shutoffs. These in-line shutoffs usually sit just beneath the sink or within the cabinet or vanity. The one on the left is usually for the hot water, the one on the right for cold water.

Dishwasher shutoff. Look first under the kitchen sink. Often there's a reducer coupling and shutoff valve leading to the dishwasher on the 1/2-inch hot-water sink-supply line. Not there? If you have a basement, look between the ceiling joists just below the appliance.

Clothes washer. There should be valves where the house-supply lines meet the washer hoses. Washer hoses are notoriously weak, so always close the valves when leaving home for an extended period.

Good Riddance to Hurricane Season

It's over or at least for this year. The US/Caribbean hurricane season officially ended November 1st, with 2004 proving to be one of the worst years on record as four major hurricanes hit land and caused serious damage. Likewise, Asia has seen 12 typhoons rip through it this year.

It was the Atlantic season that has occupied the headlines all summer as major storms brewed up and then chased across the region. Four major hurricanes hit Florida, breaking records as the worst season ever in the U.S. Charley came first, on August 14, killing 20 people and causing widespread damage to property. It was closely followed by Frances, a massive storm the size of Texas, which prompted the biggest evacuation in Florida's history as nearly 2.5m people fled their homes. But worse was to come with Ivan, which is believed to have killed 49 in the US, and then Jeanne, the deadliest of all. It killed more than 1,500 people in Haiti before heading to the US, where it continued the destruction wreaked by the previous three storms.

Charley has already reached number two in the Insurance Information Institute's top 10 most costly hurricanes, closely followed by Ivan at number four and Frances at number five. The most recent event, Jeanne, is already at number seven.

The Insurance Information Institute's estimates about one out of every five Florida homes has been damaged by a hurricane this year and that the total number of claims will exceed 1,000,000, surpassing the 700,000 claims filed for Hurricane Andrew and setting a new record for the number of claims in such a short span of time.

By comparison, September 11, 2001 terrorist activity in New York resulted in \$32.5 billion in insurance payments on 35,094 claims. Of those 23,334 were commercial and 11,760 were personal lines claims. Workman compensation claims totaled 5,660.

The figure projected a few years ago estimated losses at \$40.2 billion, but the Victim Compensation Fund, established by Congress to compensate victims and their families, covered \$8 billion.

Insurance Industry Blemish

Marsh & McLennan is this country's largest insurance broker. They are huge and do insurance business nationally and internationally. On October 14th, the New York Attorney General announced a civil lawsuit alleging Marsh & McLennan is involved in bid-rigging and other unlawful practices.

The insurance industry has preformed magnificently to terrorism, hurricanes, tornados and other catastrophes over the years. This action is a blemish on an otherwise fine reputation of insurance companies and brokers.

Padgett-Young & Associates is small in comparison to Marsh & McLennan. Our clients need to know that our business practices are completely above board. We operate in full compliance of Federal and State laws and Ohio Department of Insurance regulations.