



Safety and Insurance Tips for College Students

GOING AWAY TO SCHOOL is an exciting time for children and their parents. But, in addition to choosing classes, finding a place to live and making new friends, there are important issues that every college student needs to think about, such as safety and insurance. Helping students and their parents understand the exposures and provide proper protection is another value-added service of the professional insurance agent.

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), there were 6000 on-campus fires in 2008. Most of these were cooking related. Appliances - hot plates, microwaves, etc. - should never be left unattended. College students living away from home need to take precautions. Living in a dorm is no different than staying in a hotel. Students should familiarize themselves with the nearest, as well as alternate, exits. Keeping a fire extinguisher handy is always a good idea.

Theft of personal property is another all too common occurrence on campus. The U.S. Department of Education reports that there were almost 32,000 campus burglaries in 2008. Students away at school may or may not be covered under their parents' homeowners' policy. Coverage for their belongings is often limited. Property that is regularly located at a residence away from the parents' residence is usually capped at 10% of the parents' contents limit. A student's home theater system could easily exceed this amount. Students living in an off campus apartment or house need their own renters policy, especially if the lease is in their name.

A renters policy provides coverage for damage to the student's possessions, as well as liability coverage for unintended damage to property of others. This would include limited coverage for accidental damage to the apartment itself. It is important to keep a record of all personal property, such as serial numbers, receipts and pictures. Many students get engaged during college. Depending on the value of the engagement ring, it may or may not be covered under the parents' homeowners policy. Scheduling the ring on the



renters policy can provide proper coverage if it is lost or damaged.

Automobile exposures also change when a child goes to college. It is estimated that 70% of students own or have access to a vehicle. Those who have their cars at school should notify their insurance carrier - whether they are on their parents' policies or their own. The change of location could change the premium. Students must take care to follow university and local parking and other motor vehicle regulations. If students are away from home without access to a car, this could reduce the insurance premium. And, remember, many companies offer good student discounts.

Health insurance is another area to be aware of. Requirements vary by state, but there is usually an age limit at which the student is no longer eligible for coverage under their parents' policy, even if they are technically still a resident of the household. In addition, students away at school may be outside of their plan's service area. There are a number of affordable health insurance programs that cater to college students. Finding out where the infirmary is and how to get help is something all students should do as soon as they get to campus.

Studying abroad is becoming a more and more popular option at institutions

of higher education. There are special insurance policies that provide coverage if the course is cancelled, and also pay for travel home should the student become ill or injured. Coverage is also available for students who travel abroad during holidays and breaks. Whether at home or away, students should always carry emergency contact information and their health insurance coverage card in an accessible place.

College students are asked to share a lot of personal information. Identity theft coverage, which can usually be included on the renters policy, helps pay for expenses incurred to repair the credit record when a person's identity is stolen. Some identity theft policies offer services to do the time consuming legwork - an important consideration to a student with a full course load. Social security cards and other personal information should be kept in a safe, locked location.

Going to college is an adventure. Ensuring that students have the proper insurance should not be. Providing practical advice and offering adequate coverage is the mark of the true insurance professional.

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