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Bicycle Safety and Insurance

Bicycling is increasingly popular, both as a sport and as a means of transportation. And bicycles can cost anywhere from several hundred dollars for a basic bike to thousands of dollars for specialized racing bikes. Whether you use your bicycle to commute to work or simply like to cycle around the block with your children, it is important to understand the rules of the road and protect your financial investment with the proper insurance.

Bicycles are covered under the personal property section of standard homeowners and renters insurance policies. This coverage will reimburse you, minus your deductible, if your bike is stolen or damaged in a fire, hurricane or other disaster listed in your policy.

If you are purchasing a new bike, keep the receipt and call your insurance agent or company representative immediately. If you own a particularly expensive bicycle, you may want to consider getting an endorsement that will provide additional coverage. Your insurance agent or company representative can review your coverage options with you.

There are two types of coverage for personal property:

- **Actual Cash Value** ? reimburses you for what the bicycle is actually worth given its age. A 10-year-old bicycle, for example, would be valued at the cost of a comparable bicycle minus 10 years depreciation.
- **Replacement Cost Coverage** ? reimburses you for what it would cost to replace your 10-year-old bicycle with one of like kind and quality at current cost. Replacement cost coverage costs about 10 percent more than actual cash value, but it is a good investment.

Homeowners and renters insurance policies also provide liability protection for harm you may cause to someone else or their property. If you injure someone in a bicycle accident and he or she decides to sue, you will be covered up to the limits of your policy. Your homeowners or renters insurance also includes no-fault medical coverage in the event you injure someone. This coverage usually ranges from $1,000 to $5,000.

To make filing a claim easier, the I.I.I. suggests the following:

- **Save your receipts**
  When you buy your bicycle you may also purchase expensive equipment to go with it, so make sure to save your receipts for everything. The cost of a helmet, patch kits, pumps, extra inner tubes and other essentials, not to mention that fancy new bike jersey, can add up quickly. If your bike and related items are stolen or destroyed, having receipts can help speed the claims process.
- **Add your bicycle and related items to your home inventory**
  Everyone should have an up-to-date home inventory of all their personal possessions. An inventory can help you purchase the correct amount of insurance and make the claims filing process easier if there is a loss. To help you create your inventory, the I.I.I. provides free, online software at KnowYourStuff.org [1].

Of course the best protection of all is to keep your bike safe; to help avoid theft, follow these simple rules:

- Always lock up your bike, even if it is in your garage, an apartment stairwell, or a college dormitory.
- Lock your bicycle to a fixed, immovable object like a parking meter or permanent bike rack. Be careful not to lock it to items that can be easily cut, broken or removed, and that the bike cannot be lifted over the top of the object to which it is locked.
- Lock up your bicycle in a visible, well-lit area.
- Consider using a U-lock and position the bike frame and wheels so that they take up as much of the open space within the U-portion of the lock as possible. The tighter the lock-up, the harder it is for a thief to use tools to attack the lock. Always position a U-lock so that the keyway is facing down towards the ground. Do not position the lock close to the ground as this makes it easier for a thief to break it.
- Do not lock up your bicycle in the same location all the time. A thief may notice the pattern and target you.
- Consider registering your bike with the National Bike Registry [2].

It is even more important to keep yourself and your family safe while you are riding. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration [3] suggests that cyclists follow these seven rules:

1. **Protect Your Head**
   Never ride a bike without a properly fitted helmet.
2. **Assure Bicycle Readiness**
   Ride a bike that fits you and check all parts of the bicycle to make sure they are secure and working well.
3. **Learn and Follow the Rules of the Road**
   Bicycles are considered vehicles on the road; therefore riders must follow the same traffic laws as drivers of motor vehicles.
4. **Act Like a Driver of a Motor Vehicle**
   Always ride with the flow of traffic, on the right side of the road, and as far to the right of the road as is practicable and safe.
5. **Be Visible**
   Always assume you are not seen by others and take responsibility for making yourself visible to motorists, pedestrians and other cyclists.
6. **?Drive with Care?**
   When you ride, consider yourself the driver of a vehicle and always keep safety in mind. Ride in the bike lane, if available. Take extra care when riding on a roadway. Courtesy and predictability are key to safe cycling.
7. **Stay Focused. Stay Alert**
   Never wear headphones as they hinder your ability to hear traffic. Be aware of your surroundings and ride defensively.

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Links:
[1] http://www.knowyourstuff.org/
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