



# Staying in Touch

*Tips, strategies and advice to help you choose the right insurance coverage*

## Road Rage: The Growing Monster

It's affecting drivers around the globe. It claims hundreds of lives every year — and Canada is currently feeling its monstrous grip.

It's called road rage, a condition that often involves anger or violence associated with on-road driving activities. Many government agencies have determined that road rage is not a myth or an invention of the media. Rather, it's a real and serious problem that manifests itself through bizarre and often violent behaviour. Since 1998, in Canada alone over 12,000 road rage incidents have been reported in the media!

What can be done? Most experts agree that the first step is to prepare yourself so you will not be the next victim. This means avoidance at any cost. You never know if the driver beside you is a ticking bomb or has concealed weapons in his or her vehicle. It's best to avoid any altercation with other motorists — period! Governments and other groups are currently trying to solve this problem through regulations, enforcement and increased penalties. Solutions take time. **Don't become a victim — take preventative measures now!**

**“A real and serious problem that manifests itself through bizarre and often violent behaviour.”**

**Here are some Do's and Don'ts that you can use to prevent a road rage attack:**

### DO

- move over to allow tailgaters to pass
- allow plenty of time for any trip you take
- leave law enforcement to the authorities
- use the passing lane only to pass
- contact police with a description of the vehicle, licence number and driver if you are confronted with road rage
- ignore gestures from other drivers
- avoid eye contact with other motorists
- be considerate and courteous

### DO NOT

- tailgate or flash your lights at other drivers
- insist on the right of way if challenged by another driver
- make eye contact, hand gestures or show irritation with aggressive drivers
- assume all foolish or aggressive acts by other motorists are intentional
- honk your horn unless absolutely necessary

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## Warning! Is your Driver's Licence still valid?

In Ontario all new drivers, regardless of age, must complete a two level "Graduated Licencing" program before they qualify for full licence privileges.

These drivers have a maximum of five (5) years from the start date of their Level One licence to earn full licence privileges. If they do not receive their Class G licence (full licence) within this 5 year period, they must reapply and start the licencing process over again.

According to information provided by the Ministry of Transportation, an estimated 125,000 Ontario drivers will see their Level One and Level Two licences automatically expire this year.

**If you received your Level One or Level Two licence in 1994/95 and have not "graduated" to a Class G licence, your licence may have already expired.** This means you could unwittingly end up driving without a licence.

Not only is this against the law, but driving without a valid licence invalidates your insurance coverage.

If this applies to you, call your nearest Ministry of Transportation Test Centre to book your appointment.



## What You Should Know About Car Rentals

There are some very serious contractual gaps in coverage for rental vehicles, particularly when you are renting in the United States. People who do not own their own vehicles need to be extremely careful.

Even if you purchase their Collision Damage or Physical/Loss Damage Waivers, some rental car contracts exclude the following:

- theft of the vehicle
- glass, tire and undercarriage damage
- animal collision
- flood and hail damage
- damage above the windshield

Incredibly, some rental contracts even include a contractual shift of liability to the customer. Each car rental company, for their own reasons, provide certain coverages and exclude others. The above list is not complete and it is not intended to criticize any particular car rental company. It is mentioned here to warn renters of possible shortcomings in the rental contract process.

If you own your own vehicle, we suggest your best strategy is to contact us and purchase the OPCF 27 rider on your personal policy. If you are covered under a business policy (and the business owner agrees to cover you), we suggest the OPCF 27b rider. These riders will extend your coverage on the same basis provided by your standard automobile policy.

Our advice whenever you rent a car is to read the contract carefully. Don't assume you're fully covered by purchasing the rental company's Physical/Loss Damage Waiver coverage. For your peace of mind, talk to us about including this coverage on your own auto policy.

It's the most convenient and inexpensive way to know you're adequately covered. Ask about the limits available.

If you think you're protected by using a "gold" credit card, read on. Many people rent vehicles with these cards believing they have coverage for physical damage provided by their credit card contract. This may not be correct. Some credit cards exclude coverage for pick-up trucks, sport utility vehicles, minivans, cargo vans, sports cars or luxury cars. Other card contracts do not cover additional drivers, while some exclude damage above the windshield. In addition some completely exclude coverage in the U.S. and astonishingly, do not even cover damage as a result of theft!

## Crime Stoppers Benefits Everyone

Have you ever seen a crime take place but turned a blind eye because you didn't want to get involved? Maybe you've overheard some information that could help solve a crime but didn't report it to the police for fear of being identified. Are you tired of criminals getting away with murder – literally?

**Crime Stoppers could be the answer.** Crime Stoppers can help you deal with these issues easily and anonymously and can even put cash in your pocket!

Crime Stoppers is a non-profit, community-level program that involves the public, the media and the police in the fight against crime. Anyone who has knowledge of a crime can call Crime Stoppers' special hotline with their tips. Callers never have to give their names and are not asked to testify in court. Anonymity is guaranteed. Calls are never recorded and display phones are not used. Callers are given a secret code number that allows them to collect a reward if their tip leads to an arrest.

**Does the program work?** You be the judge.

Since 1984 in the Toronto area alone, the program has been responsible for over 6,000 arrests, more than 17,000 criminal charges being laid, \$16 million in property being recovered and \$40 million in illegal drugs seized!

Crime Stoppers is one way you can help make our neighborhoods and communities safer.

By reducing crime, we also reduce insurance losses – that's something that benefits us all.

As your insurance broker, we're proud to support this organization through our provincial association. Be a good citizen... be a Crime Stopper! It benefits everyone.



## Don't lose your car! Ontario's Vehicle Impoundment Program explained

The Vehicle Impoundment Program was introduced earlier this year as part of the provincial government's efforts to improve road safety.

Under the program, anyone caught driving with a suspended licence because of a criminal code conviction (impaired driving for example) will have their vehicle impounded for 45 days for the first offence. Second and subsequent offences will result in the loss of their vehicle for 90 day and 180 day periods respectively.

Please note: the vehicle will be impounded even if it is not the property of the driver. In other words, if you lend your vehicle

to someone who is a suspended driver, the vehicle could be impounded for a period of time and not returned to the owner until towing and storage charges are paid.

This places responsibility on the owner of the vehicle to take all reasonable steps to make certain that any driver of his or her vehicle has a valid driver's licence. To confirm if a person has a valid driver's licence, call the Ministry of Transportation at 1-900-565-6555.

*Note:* You must have that person's drivers licence number when you call. A \$2.50 charge will apply to each inquiry.

## Secure your Home

No one wants to go through the horror of a home break-in. Unfortunately, over 108,000 breaking and entering offences were committed in Ontario in 1997 (Statistics Canada). Here are some crime prevention strategies compiled by the Metropolitan Toronto Police and the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario to help you reduce your risk and increase your peace of mind.

### OUTSIDE YOUR HOME

- keep shrubs and bushes trimmed back so your home is visible from the street and by neighbours
- keep basement windows clear so you can see in and out
- outside areas should always be well lit, especially near doors and windows
- take down old TV antennas as they can be used as ladders by burglars
- never leave items such as ladders, shovels and pieces of wood around your house
- keep your garage, storage and garden sheds locked
- make sure second floor windows and doors have functioning locks and are well secured
- make your home look occupied at all times (have neighbours pick up mail and always leave the lights on)
- get to know your neighbours (if they know your routine, they can report any unusual activity and may be witnesses if you do have a break-in)

### INSIDE YOUR HOME

- keep lights on timers (a television on a timer is a greater deterrent)
- never divulge information to telephone callers you don't know
- never attach your name, address, or licence number to your key chain
- install durable dead bolts that extend at least one inch into the door frame
- check all your window latches and locks frequently



## Impaired Driving and Your Insurance

Despite public awareness campaigns about the hazards of drinking and driving, alcohol is still a significant factor in vehicle accidents involving teenagers.

When alcohol is involved, experts report the crash risks for teenagers are much higher than those for adults. The combination of driver inexperience particularly in preventing collisions and drinking, contribute to hundreds of serious accidents among young people every year.

### The law protects society

Regardless of age, impaired driving remains the largest single criminal cause of death and injury on Canadian roadways. Under recent legislation, drivers with more than 80 milligrams of alcohol in their blood will be given an automatic 90 day licence suspension whether or not they are eventually convicted or acquitted of that offence. The same holds true for motorists who refuse a breathalyzer test. Drivers convicted in criminal court may face an additional suspension of at least one year and a possible jail term.

### Higher auto insurance premiums discourage drinking and driving

Following a licence suspension due to an impaired driving conviction, an adult male driver of a 1991 Honda Accord (with full coverage) could see his six month premium rise from less than \$500 to almost \$2,500. This new premium will decrease over time (6 years) provided the driver remains conviction-free. A driver under the age of 25 convicted of the same offence could face even greater premium increases.

### Impaired driving affects much more than insurance premiums

*An impaired driver may be required to pay to repair or replace the damage to their own vehicle. If convicted of impaired driving, the driver's insurance company will not pay for loss of income if he or she is injured in an accident.*

The facts are simple — if you drive while impaired, you are violating conditions of your insurance policy and the resulting financial obligations could be devastating. Be smart, don't drink and drive!

## Three Way Tie For First Place

Amprior, Manitowadge and Red Lake, with zero collisions, were the winners of the fourth annual Road Safety Challenge, the week-long event to see which community had the lowest number of reportable Highway Traffic Act collisions per capita.

Thirty-four communities from across Ontario competed in the event. Each community conducted several road safety related activities during the first week of June. Road safety themes during the week included intersection safety, drinking and driving and Car Seat Safety Day, truck safety and safe cycling.

The Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario and its members are proud to be part of this important program and encourage all communities to participate in Road Safety Challenge 2000.



## Y2K: An Update

By now you're probably aware of the potential problems related to the Year 2000. The 'Millennium Bug' is the name given to the possible disruptions caused when computer systems read the "00" date at the end of 1999. Concern has arisen that computerized equipment will interpret this date as 1900 not 2000.

Damage caused by incorrect operation or malfunction of a computerized device or damage to computerized devices

themselves are not insured losses since insurance is designed to cover damages or losses resulting from accidental or fortuitous events. With widespread publicity and subsequent knowledge about the "Year 2000 Problem," such damages and losses, if any, will not be considered fortuitous by insurers.

However, many companies will cover losses arising from certain named perils in your policy, even if they are caused by the Y2K problem. For example, if your fire detector fails to detect a fire directly because of a Y2K malfunction, the resulting fire damage will be covered since the fire damage is a named peril in your policy.

Many experts now feel the problem has been overstated and that most major organizations such as insurance companies, airlines and hospitals will be Y2K compliant. Nevertheless, we must all be aware of the issues and be prepared to take whatever preventative actions are necessary to protect our property and belongings. Should you have any insurance questions regarding Y2K, please contact us.

### GOOD ADVICE

To protect your electrical appliances – *unplug them on the evening of December 31, 1999* in case of a power surge on the first day of the year 2000. You should also make certain that all of your computer software and your important files are either placed on disks or where possible, printed out.

## Added Value — Our promise to you

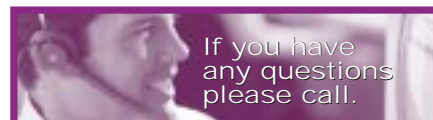
When you buy insurance for your automobile or your home, you're really getting two things: an insurance policy and a "promise of performance".

When you place your insurance coverage through our office, our promise of performance is reflected in the service we give — everyday of your coverage!

As insurance brokers, we have access to many insurance products from a variety of insurance companies. Our job is to identify the best ones for you and give you the type and level of coverage you need. Simply put, we make sure you get the very best coverage with the best possible service at the right price. We seek out the most appropriate insurance products for your needs, unlike bank-owned insurance companies who only have their own products to sell. There are also obvious shortcomings with insurance companies who sell directly to the public. There's no guarantee the products they offer are right for you.

Our "promise of performance" is clearly demonstrated when you have an accident or suffer a loss under one of your policies. As your independent insurance broker, we're on your side and can help by making sure your claim is dealt with promptly and the basis for settlement is fair.

With our courteous, highly qualified and professionally accredited staff, it's easy to see why **Your Best Insurance is an Insurance Broker**. Thank you for choosing us.



We're proud to be Members of the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario