

NEWS BLAST



Automotive Insurance

Avoid Falling Victim to a Staged Car Crash Scam

THE STAGED car accident scam is growing as perpetrators are getting craftier about entrapping unsuspecting motorists.

Scammers usually meticulously plan their staged car accidents, leaving nothing to chance. You may not even know it was staged, while witnesses may only catch a glimpse and think they saw something they didn't.

Here are some common scams:

The T-bone

In this staged accident the scammer will wait for your car to proceed through an intersection and then floor it and T-bone your vehicle.

When police arrive, the scammer's helpers will claim you ran a red light or ran the stop sign.

The wave

In this scenario, the scammer will see you are trying to switch lanes and they

wave you ahead. But when you do switch lanes, they will accelerate and hit your car. Once police arrive to take the accident report, they'll lie and say you switched lanes when it was not safe to do so and they didn't have time to brake.

Dual-turn sideswipe

In this set-up, you have to be in a dual left-turn lane on the inside and if you are close to the lane marker, the other driver will veer into you and claim you came out of your lane and hit them.

They may also have "witnesses" stationed at the intersection to back up their yarn.

Stopping short

The scammer will slam on their brakes when your car is close behind so that you will crash into the rear of the vehicle.

Swoop and stop

In this scenario, a car will suddenly pull

in front of yours and stop. Another vehicle will simultaneously pull up alongside your car, preventing you from swerving to avoid an accident.

Furthering the scams

Scammers and their "passengers" will often also claim injuries they didn't incur. They may also be in cahoots with shady doctors and chiropractors, who inflate their bills and over-treat.

These car crash scams can leave you paying for damages you didn't cause.

Even if your insurer covers the crash and the damage to your car, you will still be without your car for a time and dealing with insurance paperwork and the repair shop.

How to avoid accident scams

One of the best ways to avoid being the victim of a fake accident claim is by exercising caution while driving.

Tailgating or failing to leave enough space between your vehicle and a vehicle

See 'Camera' on page 2

CONTACT US

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Personal Liability

Umbrellas Are Not Just for Rainy Days Anymore

ONE OF THE most important insurance policies you can buy is the personal umbrella policy, but many people are unaware they need one.

Consider that lawsuits happen every day and if you were sued, would you have enough money to cover your attorney's fees and possible judgments?

Most homeowner's and automobile policies offer protections to cover legal liability, but is it enough? If you are concerned about your ability to cover all possible expenses of a lawsuit, you should consider purchasing an umbrella policy.

This insurance will cover you if you cause bodily injury, property damage or personal injury to another party.

Umbrella policies also offer protections that traditional homeowner's or auto policies do not, including:

- False arrest
- Libel or slander
- Invasion of privacy
- Wrongful entry
- Eviction

While an umbrella policy offers additional protection, not all claims are covered. Most umbrella policies do not cover punitive damages.

Additionally, some umbrella policies are only available to policyholders who carry both their homeowner's and auto insurance policies through the same insurer.

Since umbrella policies are tapped only after the liability limits on your homeowner's or auto policies are exceeded, they are usually inexpensive. The premium on a policy with a million dollar limit is usually \$200-300 per year. ❖

YOU MAY NEED AN UMBRELLA POLICY IF...

- Your total assets exceed your underlying liability limits.
- You are financially responsible for the actions of a young, inexperienced driver.
- You live in an exclusive and affluent neighborhood.
- You have a high-profile career or high income.
- You frequently host guests on your property.
- Your residence includes a swimming pool.
- You own waterfront property, a farm or a ranch.
- You own watercraft, aircraft, or off-road vehicles.
- You own numerous rental properties.
- You engage in extensive international travel for pleasure.



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If You Suspect a Scam, Call Police, Don't Leave the Scene

ahead of you leaves you vulnerable to becoming the victim of a staged accident. All the driver ahead of you has to do is abruptly stop to cause you to crash into the rear of their vehicle.

If you believe you are being targeted by someone staging an accident, do not leave the scene. Call the police and let the officers who respond handle taking a report of the accident.

Keep a camera (if you don't have a smartphone), pen and paper in the car so that you can take photos and notes at the scene.

More motorists are also installing dash cams that turn on when the car starts and are constantly recording. These can be all the proof you need to refute the scammer's side of the story.

Take pics from every angle of the involved

vehicles, with special focus on the damage. Also, capture on camera the license plate, as well as photos of the driver and all the passengers in the other vehicle.

Take down the following information:

- Driver license number.
- Vehicle registration information.
- Car insurance information.
- Name, address and phone number.
- The general height and weight (as well as the ethnicity) of the other car's driver and passengers.

When you report the accident to your car insurance company, you should tell them if you suspect a scam. ❖

Homeowner's Insurance

Notify Us Before Remodeling Your Home



IF YOU ARE planning any home improvements, you should check your coverage before you start. Whatever you do, make sure that you have insurance in place during and after construction.

Many people must alter their coverage or add more. Waiting until the project starts or is finished can be an expensive mistake, so take the following steps to avoid a costly problem.

Discuss home improvement plans with us

Ask us about updating a homeowner's policy, and whether other types of insurance will be needed for protection during the construction process.

People who are not construction workers should not help unless there is sufficient liability coverage for their protection.

Many homeowners must raise their no-fault medical protection limit for such workers.

For a larger project, it is best to consider a "course of construction policy," which covers the home during the building process from weather or theft damages.

Make sure the contractor is covered

Before allowing a contractor to start work, ask to see their insurance policies. Contractors should carry both workers' compensation and commercial general liability insurance. If an insured contractor's worker sustains injuries, that individual will not be able to sue the homeowner. Don't hire a contractor who won't provide insurance documents.

Store all receipts and records

Be sure to take photographs before, during and after the

remodeling project. This provides a virtual record of what the property looked like during each phase.

Hold on to all contracts from contractors, and be sure to save receipts for all materials purchased. Keep receipts for any other belongings bought for the home during the project.

Update insurance policies after the project

Let us know when you make any home improvements. Insurance limits may need to be increased following a major renovation.

Make copies of all of the records and receipts as the insurance company may ask for them.

This helps them assess needs and assign accurate values for the improvements. If you are adding expensive items, you may need an endorsement to your policy.

More liability coverage may be needed if you installed a pool or spa. An umbrella policy may be the right solution.

Be sure to ask us about discounts. When you install smoke detectors, stronger doors, deadbolt locks or burglar alarms, they may qualify for discounts.

Some insurers also offer larger discounts to people who install more sophisticated burglar alarm, sprinkler or fire alarm systems. You may also qualify for a discount if you've upgraded your plumbing, electricity, roof or windows.

This is especially true if any energy-saving features were installed.

In areas prone to strong storms, shutters, reinforced roofs and shatterproof windows may also result in discounts. If you are remodeling to accommodate a new spouse or child, make sure to review other insurance changes. ❖

Neighborhood Disputes

Homeowner's Insurance and Lawsuits

IT IS COMMON for neighbors to disagree. One person may think that their outdoor dog barking at people passing by is an asset for keeping them safer from intruders. But, a neighbor who enjoys peace and quiet would think the dog is a nuisance.

Another neighbor may enjoy listening to his or her music at a loud volume, but others who live in the neighborhood will likely find it annoying.

Some situations may not be about noise. People who live in neighborhoods with a uniform appearance may hassle a new homeowner who decides to paint their house a clashing color.

Whether the source of the problem is noise or something else, disagreements between neighbors can escalate into lawsuits. Before this happens, it is important to know what types of provisions a homeowner's policy provides for legal issues.

Many people think that a homeowner's insurance policy covers most types of lawsuits filed against them. For this reason, people are usually not as careful as they should be about preventing them.

For example, consider a new homeowner who moves into a subdivision, replaces the existing fence with higher boards and paints them contrasting colors. If the subdivision has rules about the permissible colors and acceptable maximum height of fences, they will try to get the new homeowner to comply.

Homeowners who refuse may find themselves facing a lawsuit for violating the subdivision's code. The courts will likely favor the subdivision's rules, and a homeowner's policy will not provide coverage for the legal battle. Therefore, it is important to understand exactly what

legal issues are covered under the policy.

Loud noises, eyesores and changes are all issues that do not physically harm another person. While they may be annoying, they are not issues that would be covered by a homeowner's policy if they escalate into a lawsuit.

Always remember that a homeowner's policy offers protection for two types of liabilities, which are property damage and bodily injury. If the family dog bites someone on the property, a guest falls off a broken step or one of the kids breaks a visitor's car window, a homeowner's policy covers such issues.

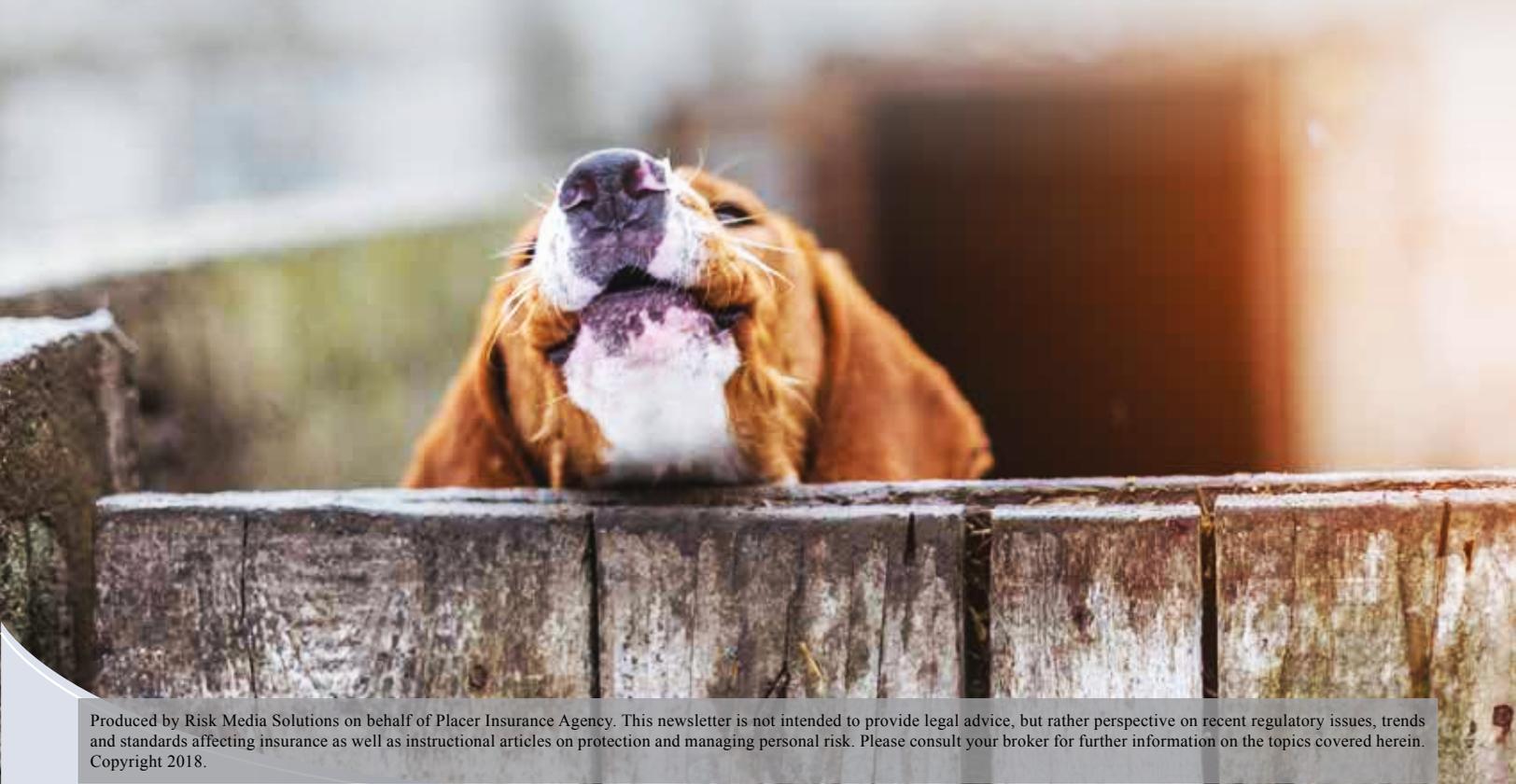
Since coverage is limited to two types of physical damage, it is important to work as hard as possible to settle disputes with neighbors. For example, if neighbors complain about a barking dog, it may be best to enroll the dog in training or purchase a no-bark citronella collar.

Trim overgrown shrubs or trees that neighbors may complain about. Many people get angry and frustrated when a neighbor makes accusations or complains.

Anger is usually what causes people to be stubborn and refuse to compromise. Always listen to what neighbors have to say, and try to understand the situation from their perspective.

Use common sense to arrive at a solution that is favorable to both parties.

However, the best way to avoid anger and confrontation is to fix possible nuisances before neighbors complain. For additional information about avoiding problems and lawsuits with neighbors, call me.



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