

NEWS BLAST



Summer Heat

Ten Things Not to Leave in Your Car on Hot Days

SUMMER'S A busy time, what with the kids out of school and the family taking road trips on the weekends.

And thanks to heart-breaking news reports of deaths, you are aware of the dangers of leaving your kids or pets in the car on hot days. When the sun's beating down, your car turns into an oven.

But besides the obvious danger to children and animals in the car, the heat can also take a toll on your personal belongings. This includes melting, warping and even catching fire.

Below is a handy list of 10 often-forgotten things you'll want to keep out of your scorching hot vehicle, according to a recent report on The Weather Channel:

Medications – Being out in the sun or exposed to heat can actually change the composition of some medications or degrade their potency.

Disposable lighters – Lighters are very dangerous to have in a vehicle when the mercury rises because they have the ability to explode in high temperatures,

which can cause damage to glass inside the vehicle or burn holes in the seats. In the worst-case scenario, it can spark a fire in your car.

Chocolate – Don't leave any chocolate candies in the car, as they will liquefy in a jiffy all over your seats. It may be easy to clean up on leather seats, but on fabric it's another story.

Canned soft drinks – If you don't want to clean up a sticky mess after the can explodes courtesy of the heat, don't leave canned soda in your car.

Electronics – Even though removing electronics may seem like a no-brainer, there are often some things you generally don't remove from your car, such as your MP3 player or GPS. Don't want them damaged on hot days? Take them out.

Sunglasses – High heat can warp the shape of frames and the lenses in your glasses. That would be a shame if you own a pair of high-end shades.

CDs and DVDs – Remove any CDs and DVDs you have stored in that little slot in

your car-door if you want to continue listening to/watching them. These items can warp and eventually melt if left in a hot car for a long enough period of time.

Plastic items – Not only will many plastics melt in high temperatures, never drink from a plastic water bottle that has been left in the car. Chemicals in the bottle's plastic could leak into the drink and cause health problems.

Crayons – Your kids may have left their crayons in the car on your road trip. And if you leave your car in the sun while at the aquarium or outlet mall, you may return to a dazzling mess, but still a mess that's soaked colors into your seats and carpeting. Melted crayons, since they are wax-based, are extremely hard to clean up.

Lipstick – Worse than crayons, lipstick easily melts in even mildly hot environments and is no match for a hot vehicle. Put it in your purse and take it with you, unless you want to be scrubbing your car later. ❖

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Important Documents

Protecting Your Valuables: Safe vs. Safe-deposit Box



WE TALK A lot in these pages about the need to protect your assets from fire and theft, but there are some items in your home that you likely cannot afford to lose in any circumstances.

Think: birth certificates, passports, Social Security cards, tax documents and any collections of valuable items, like stamps or coins.

If they are in a drawer somewhere in your home, they could be only ashes after a fire – and replacing them takes time.

If you don't have a plan for which documents and other important items you need to keep out of harm's way, we can help you sort through the confusion here.

First off, if you don't have a home safe, or a safe-deposit box at your bank, you need to consider which one is best for you and decide what to keep inside. In most cases, though, if you want the best in protection, you should have both.

Here's what you need to know:

Safe-deposit boxes

One way to decide what you should keep in a safe-deposit box is to include items you may not feel secure enough storing at home.

Home safes

If you are selecting a home safe, you'll want one that can protect against theft and fire. The safe should be heavy enough so it can't be carried out of your home.

First, there are no "fireproof" consumer safes on the market today. They are all fire resistant, meaning that they resist heat and smoke (and some protect against water) over a given period of time, usually 30 to 150 minutes.

Fire-resistant safes are engineered and designed to protect paper and keep the internal temperature of the safe below 350 degrees, which is the critical temperature where paper will start to char and burn. Fire-resistant safes protect paper documents (and even small amounts of cash) from heat and smoke damage.

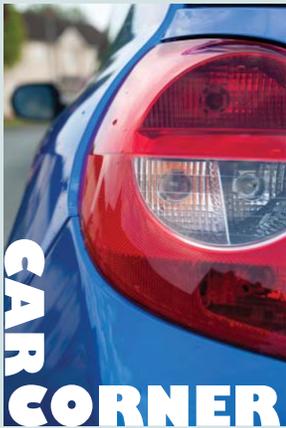
ITEMS TO KEEP IN A SAFE-DEPOSIT BOX

- Original birth certificates and Social Security cards.
- Originals of property deeds, car titles, etc.
- Valuable collections or family keepsakes that you don't access very often.
- A home inventory that includes pictures and videos to use for making claims.
- Any special data on hard drives or other electronic media. Do not store this in a home safe because while they are designed to protect documents from fire, the inside of the safe humidifies during a fire, which can damage electronic data at higher temperatures.
- Anything you may need to access quickly, such as passports and power of attorney documents.
- Valuable jewelry you rarely wear.

WHAT TO KEEP IN A HOME SAFE

- Insurance policies and your agent's contact information.
- Photocopies of passports, credit cards and driver's licenses, in case they are ever lost or stolen from your purse or wallet.
- Tax documents and tax returns from the past six or seven years.
- A list of your family's medical information and contacts, including doctors, pharmacies and medications. You may need these details to get new supplies of medications you use on a regular basis.
- Investment and banking documents, including billing contact information, as well as emergency cash.
- Heirlooms and other valuable jewelry and watches.
- Wills and other important legal documents, including wills that list you as the executor. Don't keep these in a safe-deposit box, which could be difficult to access after your death. Also keep copies of wills in which you are designated the executor.
- Passports. These are better kept at home in case you need to make an emergency trip.
- Important papers related to investments, retirement plans, bank accounts, and associated contact information.
- Valuables such as coins and cash
- Spare keys and titles to all vehicles.
- Safe-deposit box keys.

Will Driverless Cars Reduce Auto Insurance Prices?



THE RECENT death of a driver of a Tesla in self-driving mode illustrates the current limits of self-driving cars.

But as the technology improves, it's expected that more cars will have this feature, which is expected to greatly reduce the amount of accidents on the roads.

Already, thanks to significant strides in technology, cars are safer than ever and the number of deaths from accidents continues to fall.

The number of accidents is expected to drop sharply because more than 90%

of crashes are caused by driver error. If driverless technology takes hold, the accident numbers could see a slow decline as uptake increases, which in turn could reduce consumers' auto insurance bills.

Already, there are a number of cars that have collision-avoidance features, such as blind-spot detectors and front-end crash-warning systems. The auto industry and federal regulators also have agreed to equip nearly every new car with automatic emergency braking systems within the next six years.

Data from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety and the Highway Loss Data Institute already show a reduction in property damage liability and collision claims for cars equipped with forward-collision warning systems, especially those with automatic braking.

The evolution to self-driving vehicles

Among the major automakers testing self-driving cars are Audi, Ford, Mercedes, Nissan, Tesla, Toyota and Volvo. Completely self-driving cars are also being developed by Google.

Currently, the vehicles have some ability to travel without the driver intervening but only in certain situations, such as low-speed, stop-and-go highway traffic. Slow speeds give the car's computers more time to process information and react.

But no cars as of yet should be left to do the driving at all times, as the tragic Tesla crash illustrates. The technology is not seamless and all manufacturers ask that drivers continue to pay attention so that they can act if needed.

Insurance

Despite all of the advances in safety technology, the number of accidents has actually started ticking upwards, a trend that many experts attribute to distracted driving from cell phone use.

The number of crashes rose 10% to 6.06 million in 2014 from 5.51 million in 2009, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. But what will the insurance picture look like when self-driving cars become the norm?

The consulting firm KPMG estimates that over the next 25 years, the number of accidents could plunge 80% from current levels due to technological advances.

Here are some predictions by the Insurance Information Institute and Rand Corp.:

Liability: A study by Rand in 2014 predicted that there will still be a need for liability coverage, but perhaps the cost will decrease.

As cars are become increasingly automated, the onus might be on the manufacturer to prove it was not responsible for what happened in the event of a crash.

Rand has suggested some kind of no-fault auto insurance system.

Physical damage: Coverage for physical damage due to a crash is less likely to change, but may become cheaper if the potentially higher costs to repair or replace damaged vehicles is more than offset by the lower accident frequency rate.

That said, there will likely be higher repair costs for vehicles because of the more expensive technology used in them.

Comprehensive: Coverage for losses not caused by crashes, but by wind, floods and other natural elements and by theft, is unlikely to change and could increase due to the aforementioned expected higher repair costs. ❖



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Asset Protection

Have You Insured Your Boat or Personal Watercraft?

It's summertime and for many that means leisurely weekends on the river, lake or ocean on their boat or personal watercraft like jet skis.

But just because you're out on the water doesn't mean there aren't risks, to you and others – or to your watercraft. But what kind of coverage do you need? Should you just purchase coverage similar to what you have for your car?

In fact, insuring a small boat or personal watercraft is similar to buying insurance for your car, while buying insurance for a yacht is more like buying homeowner's insurance.

First off, your homeowner's insurance does not extend to your boat, but it may extend coverage if it's a small one with no engine, like a rowboat or a simple sailboat. But if you buy a boat for more than \$10,000, your homeowner's policy won't cover it.

So for most of us who purchase a boat, you should also make sure it's covered properly.

Watercraft insurance explained

Like home insurance, a boat policy covers you for liability if someone is injured on your craft. The insurer will also give you a choice between replacement cost or cash value in case of a total loss such as a fire or if you have an accident bad enough that will require the boat to be totaled.

Like auto insurance, a boat policy typically includes coverage for bodily injury that your boat inflicts on others, property damage that it inflicts on docks and other boats, and physical damage to your craft should you hit something or run aground.

And like auto insurance you can purchase:

- Comprehensive insurance to cover against theft, vandalism and fire.
- Personal property coverage for any personal possessions you may keep on the boat.
- Uninsured boater insurance in case someone who is not insured plows into you.
- Roadside assistance in the event you need a tow.

However, many insurers will allow you to lay up or suspend coverage for a specific period of time during the year when you won't be using the boat. But you need to be aware of the time period during which your boat is insured.

Some boat owners have been caught unawares when they have an accident on a nice sunny afternoon in late October, when their policy specifies it's only covered from April 1 to Oct. 1.

Agreed vs. market value

When deciding on insurance you need to decide if you want the "agreed value" covered or the "market value" covered.

Under agreed value, you and the insurance company agree on the value of the boat up front so if you need to make a claim for serious damage, the insurer will pay you up to that amount.

However, with market value, the insurer will pay up to the current market value (new price minus depreciation) if the boat is totaled. Insuring the market value can save you up to 25% on the premium, depending on the insurer.

Typically, if you own a new boat you may want to go with agreed value since the boat, much like a car, will depreciate once you take it out of the showroom.

Here are three other tidbits of information you may want to know:

- If you are towing your boat and the boat is damaged, the car policy will cover it and the limits of that policy apply.
- If the boat is out of water and parked at your home, the watercraft insurance will typically not cover damage, vandalism or theft. That would be covered by your homeowner's policy. In this case, an umbrella policy is recommended.
- Most boat insurance policies have navigational limits, meaning that the boat will only be covered in a certain geographic area. ❖

