

# ISL

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Summer 2005

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## Hurricane Preparedness Checklist

Take the following steps...

Well in advance of hurricane season

- 1) Maintain a relationship with your roofer and contractor. Experience shows that these professionals are in high demand immediately after a hurricane. Having an existing relationship will help facilitate a response when you need it most.
- 2) Verify that you have storm shutters to protect ALL openings, including doors, windows and skylights. French, sliding-glass door and garage doors are particularly vulnerable to high winds due to their large size. Special attention should be given to protect them.
  - a. French doors should have at least three hinges on each door and be reinforced with fastening bolts that lock the doors together. Ideally, doors should open out to increase resistance against strong winds.
  - b. Sliding glass doors should be replaced with impact-resistant door systems.
  - c. Garage doors should be reinforced with structural ribs and a heavy-duty track system designed to withstand high winds.
- 3) Replace existing standard windows with impact-resistant window systems. Standard glass can be penetrated easily by flying debris; impact-resistant window systems are designed to withstand direct impact by wind-borne objects. They're also permanent and won't require pre-storm installation.
- 4) Have storm shutters and anchor bolts professionally inspected to ensure they perform as designed. Replace both the shutters and anchor bolts immediately if not working properly.
- 5) Check caulking around windows and doors to ensure no deterioration has occurred. This will help prevent wind-driven rain from entering your home.

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## President's Corner

Greetings, and welcome to the first edition of Lutgert Smith Lesher's Insurance Newsletter.

We are pleased to provide you with this periodic look at important insurance, risk management and estate planning related issues. Lutgert Smith Lesher Insurance (LSL) is committed to providing you with accurate information and sound advice that will assist you as you evaluate your own unique circumstances. This newsletter is designed to provide information and advice that we feel warrants your consideration. We certainly hope you find it to be of value.

Our inaugural issue covers a variety of topics from determining the level of coverage that is appropriate for your individual situation to dealing with and preventing heat related illness.

Please feel free to forward any comments or suggestions you may have regarding our newsletter to [budh@lslinsurance.net](mailto:budh@lslinsurance.net). We value your input!

Bud Hornbeck

President and CEO

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Profiles of Distinction 2005



## Preventing Heat Related Illness

The human body naturally cools itself but continuous exposure to extreme heat can overwhelm those mechanisms, leading to illness and even death.

The following are four types of heat-related ailments listed in order of severity. Note that a less severe condition can quickly become more severe unless steps are taken to remedy the problem as early as possible.

- **Heat Cramps** - painful muscles spasms in the arms, legs, or abdomen, often with dizziness, weakness, and profuse sweating. Such cramps actually occur more often in well-conditioned people after prolonged heat exertion and are caused by the loss of sodium through sweating. Increasing daily sodium intake slightly during hot weather exertion can help prevent cramping.
- **Heat Syncope** - fainting caused when the body compensates for too much heat by diverting blood from the brain to the skin.



- **Heat Exhaustion** - extreme fatigue with muscle aches, nausea, and fever. Additional symptoms can include clammy skin, diarrhea, rapid pulse, vomiting, and weakness.
- **Heat Stroke** - failure of the body's temperature control systems. Symptoms can include disorientation, agitation, hyperventilation, racing pulse, lethargy, convulsions, and eventually loss of consciousness. The body temperature rises to extremely high levels, sometimes above 110 °F.

### Helping a victim of heat-related illness:

- Take the person out of the heat.
- Loosen their clothing.
- Apply cool, wet cloths (not freezing or cold) and/or soak the victim's clothing with water.
- Elevate the feet 8 to 10 inches.
- And, if the person is conscious and not vomiting, offer plenty of fluids.

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## Employers Need to Ensure Employees Are Financially Prepared for High-Deductible Health Plans

According to new research by the Commonwealth Fund, high-deductible health plans often trigger financial difficulties and cause members to forgo needed care. Results of the survey are based on responses from 4,052 adults polled nationwide covered by high-deductible health plans.

Approximately 49% of adults with high-deductible coverage have debts or problems in paying medical bills, compared to just 31% of those covered by lower-deductible plans. Furthermore, individuals with high-deductible plans are more likely than those with lower-deductible plans to leave a prescription unfilled or skip a medical test, treatment, or follow-up when needed, due to cost, the organization reports.

"Health savings accounts coupled with high deductible health plans have potential pitfalls, especially for families with low incomes or individuals with chronic health conditions, who are at greater risk of accruing burdensome medical debts and facing barriers to needed health care," said Commonwealth Fund President, Karen Davis. "The evidence is that increased patient cost-sharing leads to underuse of appropriate care."

With many employers evaluating Health Savings Accounts (HSAs), what questions should employers consider to make sure their employees are ready for a change?

1. Will the employer contribute to the HSA on behalf of the employee? If not, what happens to employees who cannot afford to save into a HSA?
2. Will the employer offer a HSA alongside of a traditional major medical plan? Giving employees a choice of plans should reduce the stress associated with such a large transition.
3. What is the average income of the company's employees? Lower income employees have less money to save in HSAs and could be impacted the most by an unexpected medical claim.

While HSAs have been proven to cut down on unnecessary medical care and reduce frivolous claims, thoughtful employers need to consider how a high-deductible health plan will impact their employees' financial lives. Financially stressed employees make for unproductive employees.

For additional information: contact Gina Shubert: [Ginas@slinsurance.net](mailto:Ginas@slinsurance.net).

## Hurricane Alert!

When a hurricane/tropical storm is approaching our area, all insurance carriers suspend writing new property business until we are out of danger from the storm. Since storm season is upon us, we strongly suggest you NOT delay sending us your signed applications and checks for coverage. If a storm does approach, we will not be able to bind your coverage until the storm has passed. Contact your LSL agent for more information.



## Recent Survey Shows Majority of Homeowners Are Underinsured

Two out of three U.S. homes are vastly underinsured according to a recent survey. Based on survey results, the average homeowner's policy insures less than three quarters of the projected replacement cost of the home. "With the active hurricane season that we experienced last year, it is imperative that we insure each home to its replacement value" said Betty Curry, Operations Manager.

The most common reason for all this, quite simply homeowners often forget to update their policies. Home remodeling and additions often drive up the value of the property beyond the stated policy limits, but these improvements might never be reported to the insurance company. And rising construction costs and changing building codes are raising the price tag to rebuild.

To combat this effect, homeowners should review policies as they renew each year. Suspected changes in the value of their homes should be communicated to their agents.

### Is Your Home Properly Insured?

Do you have enough coverage to reconstruct your home in the event of a disaster? Most homeowners do not according to a recent study. Here are some tips to consider:

- Understand what your policy covers and does not

cover. And just because your bank requires your policy to cover the mortgage at a minimum does not mean your insurance should be based on this amount. Insure your home, not the mortgage.

- Consider adding an inflation guard to your policy, if available. This will cost extra money, but will help offset the rising cost of rebuilding.
- If building codes or city ordinances change, you might be required to rebuild according to these new laws. The older the home, the more it will cost to bring it up to code. In most cases, policies will not pay for these extra costs. An "Ordinance or Law Endorsement" can help pay these costs.
- Talk to builders in your area to get an idea of replacement costs. What is the going rate per square foot for new construction? Current appraisals are also a good source for information.

## continued from page 1...Hurricane Preparedness Checklist

- 6) Keep trees and shrubbery trimmed. Prune weak branches and trees around your home to remove limbs that overhang or are too close to the structure. Use hearty native plants in your landscaping design. Use mulch instead of pebbles around plantings, as pebbles often become projectiles during a hurricane.
- 7) When making repairs to your roof, verify that its structure and decking are appropriately attached (in accordance with the latest codes) to the framing members of your home. Also verify that rafters and trusses are adequately connected to the walls and foundations.
- 8) Install a back-up electrical generator of adequate size to power the air conditioning system in your entire home, as well as critical electrical appliances and electronics (i.e. your alarm system). If water enters the home, air conditioning can expedite the drying process and help prevent additional damage. Should you already own a back-up generator, have it maintained annually and tested under load to ensure proper operation.
- 9) Make sure drains on terraces and balconies are not clogged and allow water to flow freely.
- 10) Discuss your coverage with your agent or broker. Know what your hurricane deductible is and what your policy covers during a hurricane.

### When a hurricane is forecast to hit your area:

- 1) Install storm shutters and secure your garage door.
- 2) Move personal possessions to the center of your home — away from windows and doors. Elevate your belongings as much as possible in case water pools on the floor around windows and doors.
- 3) Remove window treatments from windows and French doors.

Elevate any drapes hanging on the floor in the event that water pools there.

- 4) Roll up area rugs and move them to the center of your home. Elevate them if possible.
- 5) Place towels at the base of terrace doors to absorb any water that might enter.
- 6) Remove all patio furniture from your yard or terrace, and store it in your garage, house or apartment. Remove potted plants, lawn ornaments and sculptures and store them indoors. These items could damage your home if picked up by the wind.
- 7) Fill the fuel supply for your back-up electrical generator. Test the generator under load to ensure it is functioning properly.
- 8) Place important documents, i.e. insurance policies, bank account information, credit card information, important contact numbers, etc. in a plastic container to ensure their availability after the storm passes.

### After the hurricane has passed:

- 1) Return to your home as soon as possible to assess damage.
- 2) Should you discover water in your home, contact a restoration company immediately to begin the water extraction process.
- 3) Run the air conditioner to dehumidify your home.
- 4) Remove any wet items and store them in the garage, if possible.
- 5) Call your agent or broker to report any damage.

If you have questions or would like more information on how to prevent or minimize the impact of losses, contact: your LSL agent or customer service representative

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continued from page 2... *Preventing Heat Related Illness*

**Preventing heat-related illness:**

- Wear loose-fitting, lightweight, light-colored clothing.
- Use sunscreen to prevent sunburn, which can hinder the skin's ability to cool itself.
- Wear a hat that provides shade and allows ventilation.
- Limit vigorous activity during hot, humid weather.
- Drink plenty of water—even more than you need to satisfy your thirst—before, during, and after exercise. Drinks with sugar and/or caffeine will not help; they actually rob your body of fluids. Alcohol causes you to lose more fluid than you consume.
- Avoid hot, confined places. If you can't, then work in shifts. Work a while, and then rest in a cooler place for a few minutes.

- Electric fans may provide comfort, but when the temperature is in the high 90s, fans will not prevent heat-related illness.
- Some prescription and over-the-counter drugs can interfere with the body's ability to regulate temperature. Discuss with your doctor whether any of your medications may have this effect and, if so, be especially careful to limit your exertion and drink plenty of water.

At the first sign of heat illness such as cramps, nausea, dizziness, or severe headaches—get away from the heat. Find a cool spot and rest for a few minutes and get some fresh air. Remember, it is easier to prevent heat illness than to treat it once symptoms develop. And always seek immediate medical help if you or a co-worker develops any of the symptoms described above.

For additional information, contact Scott Bills:  
[Scottb@slsinsurance.net](mailto:Scottb@slsinsurance.net).

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