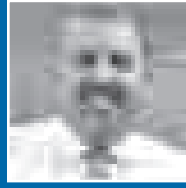


REST INSURED



by **JEFF GELINEAU**
Vice President of United Agencies,
The Club's Auto and Home Insurance Partner



Should I Submit A Claim, or Not?



How do you know whether or not you should bother submitting an insurance claim?

First, let's talk about auto insurance claims. These claims can be tricky.

The insurance company has the right to adjust your claim to the best of its ability. If you get involved in the claim and make things worse, the insurance company has a right to deny all coverage instead of helping you out. This is frequently the problem with people who try to handle their own claims.

Say you are in a parking lot and back into someone who is also backing out of their spot. The only damage is a broken taillight on the other car, so you say, "Oops, my fault," and offer to replace the taillight. You write them a check for \$125, thinking the matter is resolved. Then you get a notice in the mail six weeks later from an attorney saying that the person suffered "trauma to the neck and upper torso upon impact with your vehicle," and they are suing you for \$15,000. If you turn the claim over to the insurance company at that point, they might claim that you broke the terms of your policy by not reporting the claim "in a timely manner" after the incident, and deny coverage.

A simple rule to follow is: If there is anyone on, in or near the car, or the police are called for any reason, then *turn in the claim!* But, if there is not even the slightest possibility of someone submitting a bodily injury claim, then you may want to consider paying the claim yourself.

Comprehensive coverage covers losses arising from, among other things, fire, theft, vandalism and impact from flying objects. These claims generally do not affect your premiums. A major consideration in deciding whether to report these losses is your deductible. If the cost of these losses is below your deductible, then you would have to pay the entire cost of the loss anyway. Frequent comprehensive claims may also result in your insurance company raising your deductible or deleting this coverage upon your policy's renewal.

Collision coverage covers losses as a result of a collision with anything attached to the earth's surface. These claims most likely affect your premiums depending on the degree of fault attributed to you. Again, if you are involved in an accident with another vehicle, then *turn in the claim*, no matter how small or minor it might appear. But if you simply scratch your own car on your own garage door on the way to work, consider repairing it yourself.

Now let's look at homeowner's claims. Not everything is covered, but since you bought the coverage, you should not hesitate to use it when you need it. Insurance companies are heavily regulated by the state they operate in, and just like any business, they prefer happy customers rather than angry ones.

Insurance companies are allergic to claims. Increasingly, they are adding surcharges at renewal (or some may even drop your policy altogether) for a single claim in the past year. And, some homeowners insurance companies won't renew your coverage if you submit just two small claims within a few years, so it's best to avoid filing a small claim. A good rule of thumb is: Don't submit any homeowner's claim worth \$1,000 or less, or if your

deductible is higher than \$500, then use 1.5 times your deductible as the rule. This may seem crazy, but it's no good if they drop you.

Be careful of the "second claim." Most carriers will not cancel you for having one claim, but many will consider doing so if you have two claims in a three-year period.

To get some benefit from taking on so much of the risk yourself, raise your deductible to at least \$1,000. Some folks with decent emergency funds are even increasing their deductibles to \$2,500. Raising your deductible from \$250 to \$2,500 could cut your premium by up to 30 percent!

If you have one claim in 10 years that costs the insurance company \$10,000, you will probably remain in good standing with them as long as you pay your premiums. However, if you submit a \$1,000 claim every year for three to four years, you may find a cancellation notice in your mail before long.

All the claims you've submitted (and even claims that previous owners have submitted on your house) are reported to the CLUE (Comprehensive Loss Underwriting Exchange) database maintained by ChoicePoint. Consumers are entitled to one free copy of their CLUE report annually (for more information, go to www.choicetrust.com and click on CLUE Reports). Homeowners should read these files carefully, and immediately dispute errors or submit a written statement that fully explains any large losses.

Insurance agents are required to inform the insurance company of any claim that we know about, even if it isn't submitted to them as a claim. Every time you call us, we are obligated to say, "You need to submit this to the insurance company." But feel free to call us about your policies or any other issue that might come up.

United Agencies is the Club's partner in helping members with their home and auto insurance, and related products. We specialize in creating personal relationships with our customers, and serving their needs in a prompt, efficient and friendly manner.

Call our office today at (888) 801-5522. United Agencies Burbank. (CA License # 0252636.)

Check out the City Employees Club page on the United Agencies website at: www.unitedagencies.com/cityclub

This Website lists the upcoming visits we'll be making to City Department meetings, where you can ask us any question in person, and get an instant quote!

Have a question? Is there something about insurance that you've always wanted to know, but were too ashamed to ask? Maybe something that you've just always been curious about? Feel free to send me an email at jgelineau@unitedagencies.com, and I will try to answer your question in one of our monthly columns.

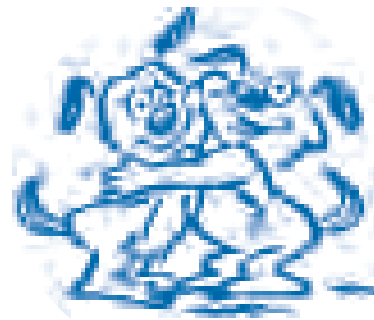
Be safe and have fun!

Call United Agencies Burbank today at (888) 801-5522.
CA License # 0252636



Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa poses with Animal Services employees.

New Animal Home On L.A.'s Westside



Animal Services opens new West L.A. Animal Care Center.

ANIMAL SERVICES — The West L.A. Animal Care Center celebrated its grand opening Feb. 23.

The new facility, at 11361 W. Pico Blvd., features special community cat rooms, get-acquainted yards for dogs and adopters, and a grassy field for training.

Several hundred people visited the new center during the public grand opening to adopt fabulous dogs, cats and rabbits and participate in the free community fair, complete with pet-related giveaways and information, care and training demonstrations, face painting, and music. Adopted dogs also got to take advantage of the Pet Day Spa to make sure they looked picture perfect for their debut in their new home.



The West LA Animal Care Center opens its doors to the public.



Jesus Castillo, Club Member; and Patricia Kellogg, Club Member.



Members of the West LA Animal Care Center staff.



Members of the West L.A. Animal Care Center staff.



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