

What Every California Driver Needs to Know about UM Insurance

What is UM Insurance?

Uninsured motorist insurance, or UM or UMI, provides protection when you are in an accident with an uninsured driver. UM also provides benefits in cases when you are involved in a hit and run accident so long as the uninsured vehicle made physical contact with your car.

In addition to UM coverage, there also is UIM, or [underinsured motorist](#), coverage. UIM provides benefits when you are in an accident with a driver who does not have enough insurance to cover all of your losses - which you are at risk of having happen any time you are in an accident with a driver carrying the minimum required liability policy.

To collect UIM benefits, the maximum benefits under your UIM policy must be higher than the other driver's liability limits. For example, if the liable driver has a liability policy for \$15,000 per person, \$30,000 per accident and you carry the same limits on your UIM policy, you will not be able to collect benefits under your UIM policy for your losses - even if the responsible driver's liability policy does not cover all of your expenses. But in the same example, if you have a UIM policy that provides coverage for up to \$30,000 per person \$60,000 per accident, then you would be able to collect benefits under your own policy if your losses exceeded the responsible driver's coverage.

In California, if you have UM insurance, you also have UIM insurance.

Are you required to have UM insurance?

California drivers are not required to have UM coverage. However, insurance companies are required to include UM coverage in all automobile insurance policies, unless the policyholder specifically declines the coverage in writing.

When issuing your policy, insurers will generally include a basic UM policy with \$30,000 per person \$60,000 per accident limits. However, if your liability coverage is less than 30/60, then the insurer will issue a policy with UM benefits to match your liability limits.

You can purchase UM coverage up to the limits of your liability policy. Depending on your liability limits, this may mean increasing the coverage you have under each type of policy in order to obtain the coverage you need.

Which losses will UM benefits cover?

UM benefits will cover your out-of-pocket expenses, including:

- Medical bills, including rehabilitation, medication and travel expenses for your treatment

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- Lost wages, income and earnings
- Loss of future earning capacity
- Repair or replacement costs to your vehicle

UM policies may also cover non-financial losses, like pain and suffering, loss of enjoyment of life, disability and permanent disfigurement.

Who is protected by a UM policy?

When you have a UM policy, it provides coverage to you and:

- Members of your household
- Minor children who do not live with you
- Children away at college
- Passengers in your vehicle at the time of the accident
- Those whom you gave permission to drive your car

UM insurance also covers you if you are injured by an uninsured driver while walking down the street, riding a bicycle or motorcycle.

Should I purchase more UM coverage than the minimum requirements?

YES. It is estimated that **one out of every five Californians does not have car insurance.** Many more only carry a minimum liability policy of \$15,000 per person \$30,000 per accident. If you are involved in an accident with one of these drivers and suffer serious injuries, you will have to find a way to pay for your losses out of your own pocket.

The best way to protect yourself from such a scenario is to have a UM policy that will provide sufficient coverage for you and your family. In general, you should carry a UM policy with \$250,000 per individual \$500,000 per accident limits. Depending on your personal situation, however, you may want to purchase more coverage. For example, high wage earners are at risk of losing significant income if they are unable to work after a [car accident](#), so it is in their best interests to purchase a UM policy that can help replace as much of their wages as possible.

Compared to other types of automobile insurance, UM coverage is relatively affordable. UM benefits normally account for only 10 percent of your total car insurance premium. While in this economy it may be difficult to find extra money to spend on car insurance, it will cost you much more in the long run if you are hit by an uninsured driver and have to come up with the money on your own to pay all of your losses.

Need Help after an Accident? Contact an Attorney.

Even if you have a UM policy, it may not be easy for you to obtain your benefits. In some cases, you have to file a claim for the benefits within 24 hours of the accident in

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order to receive them. If you are having difficulty getting your insurance company to pay the full value of the benefits you are owed under your policy, contact an experienced attorney today. A lawyer with experience helping motor vehicle accident victims can work with you to make sure you receive fair compensation for the full value of your injuries and losses. For more information, contact a knowledgeable car accident attorney today.