

## Time for an Insurance Check Up

By John Christensen

Most of us, after sufficient “encouragement” from our spouses, kids or parents, eventually make time for our yearly medical and dental check-ups. We may not like it, but it keeps us healthy and allows us to make any changes in our lifestyle that are necessary ensure we can continue to lead happy and healthy lives. We should all do the same thing with our insurance policies. Just like good health, which we take for granted until we don’t have it, good insurance is something many of us don’t give a second thought until there is an accident or emergency. Having helped victims of serious injuries for most of my 20 years as an attorney, one of the hardest things to tell people is that their ability to recover what they have lost because of someone else’s negligence is restricted or simply not available because of the lack of insurance on their part or on the part of the person who caused injury.

Every year you should take a look at your automobile and personal liability insurance policies to make sure that you have sufficient limits to cover your own assets and just as important, to “protect” your assets in the event you are responsible for causing injury to someone else. The Fall is the perfect time to do this because the carefree time of Summer is over and the hazards of Winter driving are just around the corner.

Some specifics in your auto policy that you should check include the amount of your primary liability coverage. The State of Washington mandates liability limits of only \$25,000 per person. With the high price of medical care this amount can quickly be exceeded for many minor or moderate injuries putting your personal assets, including your house and bank account, in jeopardy. Check with your insurance agent to see about increasing your liability limits to \$50,000 or even \$100,000. You will be surprised how little the premiums increase for doubling or even quadrupling your coverage. The peace of mind you will gain knowing that you are better protected is priceless.

Next, make sure that you have Personal Injury Protection, or PIP, coverage and Underinsured Motorist Coverage. PIP coverage covers most all types of medical treatment for you and the passengers who are injured in a collision regardless of who is at fault. PIP coverage also provides much needed wage loss compensation when you are unable to work because of your injuries. It even pays for medical treatment for pedestrians that you hit while driving! Underinsured and Uninsured Motorist Coverage or UM/UIM provides benefits to you when you are hit by someone who either has no insurance at all or insufficient insurance to cover the full extent of your injuries. PIP and UIM coverages are must haves to make sure you and your loved ones are fully protected on the road.

Some people ask why they need PIP if they have private medical insurance. My response is that it never hurts to be over insured, but it always hurts to be underinsured. The benefits that PIP bring include no deductibles, no mandatory co-pays, and PIP usually pays 100% of the bill compared to private insurance that pays 80% leaving you to pay the balance.

Insurance can be confusing and reading a policy is lot like deciphering an electronics manual written in a foreign language. If you have any questions about your current insurance policy or whether you should increase or add coverages please give me or any of the attorneys at MBC a call. It’s what we do and the call and advice are free.