

June 2000 Newsletter

Newsletter 17

Laptop Computer Insurance Discussed

In view of the fact that many people now are carrying laptop computers and the list is constantly growing, this reporter felt it was a good idea to check on how to correctly insure them. I contacted Brenda Vollmer, a Customer Service Representative at Western Agency, Inc., and she had the following information. The computer is covered under your homeowners policy the same as would be a TV or Radio. However, the cost to replace data is not covered if you would lose it. This coverage can be purchased but it is quite expensive. Also, if you are using the computer in your work or on the job this can change what coverage the homeowners policy would provide. Probably the number one cause of loss on a laptop computer is damage from dropping the unit. Most homeowner's policies do not cover this without adding additional coverage. Since computer coverage is complicated and each company handles them in different ways, Vollmer stresses it is a very good idea to call your agent and see where your individual policy stands. The time to find out if these machines are covered is not at the time of a loss.

Westy Hat Contest

This newsletter announces for the first time we have two 'Wear Your Westy Hat Contest' winners in one newsletter. Winners are Scott Backes for wearing his Western Agency, Inc. hat during his recent interview on the Channel 10 News and Bill Burke for making sure he has his Western Agency, Inc. hat on every time agents Chuck and Casey Tompkins see him. It has been reported that Burke keeps a spare hat with him so he can be sure and have a Western Agency, Inc. hat to wear. Thanks to both of you for wearing your Westy hats and your \$50 gift certificates to Perkins Restaurant are in the mail.

Multi-Peril Crop Insurance Corner

Western Agency, Inc. has recorded a record year in new sales of Multi-Peril Crop Insurance. When contacted by this reporter as to the reason, Crop Manager Craig Johnson attributed the gain to the service given in the 1999 crop year. " In 1999 we were one of the few agencies that were out in the field, really explaining CRC and Prevent Planting to our clients and showing them how these excellent tools could be a good Risk Management tool for them." "The resulting high claim situation with the excessive rains showed us to be correct and we were able to pay out Millions more on claims than those agents who had not sold their clients CRC or correctly explained how Prevent Planting worked." When asked what, if any things need to be attended to next on crop insurance, Johnson stated the agents would be calling to take the acreage reports as soon as possible

and for insureds who were ready to do acreage reports to call the office with a time when they would like the agent to stop out. In addition, Johnson and the entire staff of Western Agency, Inc. would also like to thank all of the existing clients, as well as the new clients who have placed business with Western Agency, Inc. this year, for their business.

Westy Knife Contest Winners Announced

The winners of last season's Westy Knife Contest were Leroy and Mary Lesterburg of RR Voltaire. Leroy and Mary each presented their own ingenious uses for their Westy knives. Whether it be cleaning fresh garden vegetables in the summer or helping with calving in the spring; the Lesterburgs have many uses for their knives throughout the seasons. During last spring's calving season, Mary used her Westy knife to save a bull calf by cutting the water bag. Not only are Westy knives practical, but they're also worth 'big bucks' stated Mary, as the average selling price for steers that fall was \$450. Congratulations to Leroy and Mary! The Lesterburgs received a gift certificate to the Ponderosa Steakhouse and two brand new Westy knives as well - just in time for the spring calving season! If you have yet to be the proud owner of a Westy jackknife, stop in our office and pick one up. It'll make you wonder how you ever functioned without one.

Year 2000 Hail Insurance Information

With the 2000 Hail Season now here, Western Agency, Inc. crop hail agent Marlen Lenton had the following points to bring up concerning this much needed insurance product. Lenton stated his biggest concern this year is that customers know that the very soonest a hail policy could be put in effect was two hours after a binder was faxed to the company. Not when the insured calls the agent but two hours after a binder has been faxed to the company. In other words if the client called the office at 2:00 P.M in the afternoon the coverage would not necessarily be in force at 4:00 P.M. that day. The coverage would not be in force until two hours AFTER the fax was sent to the company. In addition this would assume the agent was able to drop everything and get the fax to the company. The problem with calling into the office before a storm is that in the busy course of the day it is not always possible to stop everything and do a fax to a company. Also, calling an agent after hours means he will have to drive back to the office and fax a binder to a company. Lenton stressed that the agents do not mind doing this. It is just that this may delay coverage being in force for way more than two hours. The solution to this problem is simple, according to Lenton. All the client has to do is call now; before a storm is looming, and get the coverage put in force. He gave me the following short speech concerning getting the coverage in force ahead of time. "The price is the same if you buy the policy now or later; we now have adequate moisture to get the crop well into the damageable stage; the prices are in most cases the same as last year; and since you need the coverage now; lets put it in force now." I admit his logic sold me.

First Agency Newsletter Found

New Agency Gets Off Ground

"Western Agency, Inc.," the new insurance agency here in Minot, North Dakota, seems to be growing amazingly fast. Owner Chuck Tompkins reports that in the last seven months, he has acquired 150 new policyholders, and has also added 'State Auto and Casualty' company to his list of companies.

This article was printed in what is believed to be Western Agency, Inc.'s first newsletter. You may be wondering what the date on this first ever *Joe Insurance's Quarterly Gazette* is. September 1977 was Volume 1- No. 1 of this newsletter that is still going strong. Now entitled *The Insurance Roundup*, the purpose of the newsletter has remained the same throughout the years - to inform clients of the latest news in the insurance world and how it will affect them. It also keeps clients informed of activities within our local offices. The combination of important information and humor is what keeps this newsletter going strong. Hopefully, with the help of your continued interest in the newsletter, *The Insurance Roundup* will be published for another 20 years. Thanks for all the support, keep up the good readin', and thanks for your business!

Business Pursuits in the Home

These days many people operate a business out of their home. One of the things that many times get left out of the planning cycle in these home businesses is whether or not the person's homeowner's insurance policy will provide insurance coverage for the home business. In actual fact in most cases there is very little or no coverage afforded under the basic homeowners policy for a home business. However, since there are so many people starting a home business these days most companies are offering low cost endorsements to cover many of these operations. The problem is that if the agent is not notified of the business he of course cannot get it correctly covered. Insureds operating a home business are urged to give their agent a call and see if their individual situation is correctly covered. In addition, if they are not sure if their activity is considered a business or not; why not call the agent and find out for sure? Again, the cost to correctly cover a home business is very small. People with a home business are urged to give their agent a call to be sure their individual situation is correctly insured.

Things Chuck Has Run Across

Excellent Places to Eat. An excellent Italian Restaurant In Minneapolis is Bucca Di Beppo. It is located on Hennipin Ave. This is a family style restaurant and the food is terrific. Waiter 'Tony' was our server and he helped make the meal a memorable one.

Terrific Coffee. When I was on vacation this year I visited a coffee farm on the island of Hawaii. Coffee farmer Jim Hope showed Linda and I around his coffee farm and we had him start shipping us his excellent coffee. If you have never had Kona coffee you are really in for a treat. If you want to buy some of this coffee I have a supply at the office for \$5 a package and I can get more from Jim.

Small Utility Buildings. If you are in need of a small utility building you absolutely have to call up Magic Mile Welding 838 9559 or go see the steel framed, steel clad, utility buildings they are making. These buildings are built like Fort Knox and even have a small overhead door. They are not expensive and are the best I have ever seen.

Custom Built Trailers. Prairie Truck and Equipment 838 7439 has expanded their company to include a huge department for the express purpose of building custom trailers. These can be enclosed trailers, flatbeds, dump beds, or virtually any type of trailer you can envision. The nice thing is you can have it built to your specifications, right here in Minot.

Great Jazz Concert. There is a group of young musicians who have been putting on a free jazz concert in Minot for the past several years. I don't know how they have the time and willpower to do this for our community every year but they do. There are musicians from several provinces in Canada and several states in the Union and they put on a terrific show. Concert date for this year is August 5 so if possible try and attend this event. The main driving force behind this excellent event is Chris Hanson and his phone number is 701 281 2989 and his E-Mail address is tbchristopher@worldnet.att.net <<mailto:tbchristopher@worldnet.att.net>>. Also, he has a website and it is <<http://www.geocities.com/tbchristopher>>.

Web Page. Look up our web page. The address is www.westernagencyinc.com There are interesting things on the page, our newsletter is there, the complete 'Graduated Drivers License Law for young drivers is printed there, we have a direct link to the 'Palmer Drought Index' and some information on many of the policies you buy. Also, if you think we should add anything or have ideas on how we can improve the site let us know.

Accidents. Latest accident statistics for North Dakota show rural accidents (14,423) are far more frequent than urban ones (8245). Rural crashes killed 92 compared to 10 in urban accidents. Number one cause of rural accidents was hitting a deer (2116) followed by collisions (1460) and rollovers (1304).

Crazy Claims. No wonder the rates for comprehensive coverage on vehicles are going up. While shooting at a gopher with his 30-30-caliber Thompson Contender handgun, this reporter was astonished to find that the concussion of the gun shattered the mirror on his Chevy Tahoe. Furthermore the mirror was an anti-frost, model: Was filled with fluid, had its own little alignment motor, and cost \$415 !!!!. The reporter was quick to file a loss and the loss report read. " Mirror was shattered when 'large caliber' handgun was discharged".

Cheap Office Supplies. In looking around the office for cheap things, this reporter would like to pay tribute to the file folder. Even though these files are pulled and handled on a daily basis, most of them seem to hold their own against all battery. Some of these files are well over 10 years old. This is remarkable, considering that they're valued at only \$.03 apiece and are made of paper. It is about time we finally recognize this

reasonably priced office supply, even though they have been cursed at numerous times by the file girl for causing her torn cuticles and paper cuts.

Editorial

Home Warranties Discussed: Buyer Beware. This reporter and his wife purchased a different home last year. Since the home was not new we also purchased a Home Warranty Plan on the home. Early this spring the boiler on the furnace went out and so we were thinking how lucky we were to have this policy. However, as we were soon to find out in most cases 'Home Warranty Policies' are not 'Insurance Policies'. When I called the number listed (of course there is no local agent) to file my loss I was informed that I could not just get an estimate of repair and have the damage fixed. No, I had to use 'their approved' contractor. I called this man up and he was busy and could not come out till later in the day. Keep in mind it was winter in North Dakota and the house was getting cold. The contractor I normally use was able to install the boiler in a few hours, get the house warmed up and we were on our way. Disgusted with the service I had gotten on my claim, I called the North Dakota Insurance Commissioner to see if they could help me in getting the claim settled and they told me that 'Home Warranty Companies' are usually not the same as 'Insurance Companies' and usually do not fall under their jurisdiction. However, they did file my complaint and agree to look into it. I guess the point I want to make is if you are offered one of these 'policies' be sure and ask what your rights are in the event of a loss. I have been in the 'insurance' business for 26 years and I thought I bought a 'policy'. Somebody got a 'commission' to sell this 'policy' to me but at present I am left wondering if I will ever get paid back my expenses in replacing this furnace. As I explained to the Real Estate agent who sold me the policy. "This is not the way it is in my world." " When I sell a policy my staff and I live with that contract." " If the policyholder has a loss we will make it our mission to see to it they are paid what they have due." "We do not just give the client a watts number to call." I feel it is our job to see to it our client is taken care of. It is obvious however, that with 'The Home Warranty Business' this is not the case.

The reason I am using this example of a person getting ripped of on a 'Home Warranty' policy is not just to whine. It is to point out the fallacy in attempting to deal with companies and people who want to do business over the phone. It is to point out the difficulty a client has in trying to get justice when he has no local agent, who knows the system, help guide him through a loss situation. Just to get through the Automated Phone systems of these 'no agent' companies is hard enough but then the client ends up trying to transact business with someone who can barely speak the English language and who could care less whether or not the problem is correctly taken care of. In this day of Internet sales and the constant talk of 'Having the Cheapest Price' nobody ever talks about 'DOING THE BEST JOB IN SEEING TO IT THEIR CLIENT IS CORRECTLY SERVED'. I don't know if I will ever be able to get my money back on this Home Warranty policy. However, I can tell you that Western Agency, Inc. will simply not represent a company that treats a client in this way. We can and have gotten rid of several companies in the past years that were lax in getting claims paid quickly and correctly.

The list of companies we now represent are doing an excellent job in this regard and I can assure you this will continue to be the case.