



FOR PROFESSIONALS
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CONSUMERS WARNED TO ADHERE TO INSURANCE POLICY STIPULATIONS TO ENSURE A HAPPY HOLIDAY SEASON

It is a well known fact that home burglaries tend to increase over the festive season as many homeowners leave their homes for extended periods of time, providing ideal opportunities for criminals to plan and carry out their activities at their own pace.

Nazeer Hoosen, Executive Director: PPS Short-Term Insurance Division, says that in light of this trend, it is imperative that homeowners take the necessary precautionary measures by ensuring they not only have a sound homeowners' insurance policy in place but that they also adhere to the stipulations in the policy to avoid claim rejections.

“The percentage of residential insurance claims tends to increase both in frequency and value, as criminals have more time to take the possessions over the December-January holiday period. “Before going away on holiday, it is critical that all homeowners review their policy carefully to ensure they fully understand all the terms and conditions to ensure they remain fully covered.”

One of the most important areas of the policy that homeowners need to check is whether the total sum insured stipulated is for the correct replacement value of the household possessions to avoid underinsurance, says Hoosen.

“Any new items that would typically fall under the contents section of the policy - such as a television, new sound system or other expensive electronic appliances - should be included in the sum insured to ensure they are covered in the event of theft, loss or damage. It is also important to ensure that any new items covered under the all risk section - which typically includes items that can be taken out of the home such as laptops, smartphones or iPads - are also updated with the insurance provider.”

Hoosen says some insurance companies may also require the insured to inform them of any plans to go away ahead of the trip, particularly if it is for an extended period of time. “As a general rule, it is a good idea to let your insurance company know if you are planning a trip for longer than 30 days, or if extended overseas trips are being taken, so they can discuss any necessary changes to the policy.”

“Homeowners should always have a plan in place to ensure someone they trust can access the property for any emergency situations before they go away. Giving the keys and alarm details to a close family member or trusted friend is a good way to ensure they can handle any unforeseen situations such as a burst geyser.”

“However, it is imperative when using the services of a house sitter that the person is also informed and aware of all the conditions of the insurance policy to make sure the home remains effectively covered under their watch. For example, they must ensure the house alarm is set and all doors and windows are securely locked or shut before they leave the property. They should also have easy access to all the insurance policy details and emergency numbers.”

Hoosen says homeowners often forget about the value-added benefits of their homeowners insurance policies such as home assist which can be hugely beneficial should the need arise for emergency services such as plumbers or locksmiths. "House sitters should also be aware of value-added benefits and the necessary contact details and policy numbers, in order to save the homeowner from unnecessary expenses."

He says other precautionary measures homeowners should take when they plan a holiday trip is to ensure someone empties their mailbox on a regular basis to give the impression that someone is home and even cancel newspaper subscriptions for the period. "It is also useful to install motion sensor lights on the outside of the house and place the watering systems on a timer which will not only make it appear as if someone is still staying in the house but also protects plants from wilting in the summer heat."

"As long as homeowners follow the basic requirements of their insurance policy and make sure the house is properly locked and the alarm is in working order, they can have peace of mind that their possessions will be safe over the holiday period," concludes Hoosen.