

Consumer Tips

For Purchasing Insurance

Here are a few tips to keep in mind about purchasing insurance:

- To locate a qualified insurance professional, seek recommendations from family, friends and other professionals that advise you such as your lawyer or accountant. Ask about this person's experience and background, and make sure he or she specializes in the advice and products you need. Once you have decided on an individual, be sure to provide that person with all relevant financial information.
- While you shouldn't put off an important decision that would provide protection for your family, take the time to make sure you fully understand any policy you are considering. You should be comfortable with the company, agent and product before purchasing anything.
- Be sure the insurance agent gives you choices and options before you make a final decision.
- Review the copy of your application contained in your policy. Promptly notify your insurance agent or company of any errors or missing information, and don't hesitate to ask questions about something you don't understand.
- When you purchase a policy, make your check payable to the insurance company, not to the agent. Be sure to get a receipt.
- After you have purchased an insurance policy, keep in mind that you may have a "free-look" period, usually 10 to 30 days after you receive the policy, during which you can change your mind. Read your policy carefully during this time. If you decide not to keep it, the company will cancel the policy and provide an appropriate refund.
- Review your policy periodically and especially when major life changes occur such as purchasing a new home or having children. An insurance agent can help you make sure your coverage is always aligned with your needs.
- If an insurance agent or company contacts you and wants you to cancel your current policy to buy a new one, contact your original agent or company before making a decision. Surrendering your policy to buy another could be very costly.
- If you have a complaint about your insurance agent or company, contact the customer service division of your insurance company. If you are still dissatisfied, contact your state insurance department. Most departments have a consumer affairs division, and some have a toll-free number to respond to consumer requests.