

Pro Text
by Brad Lister

Out of the Country?

Whether you're planning a vacation to a paradise island or you decide to travel state side in your Winnebago; or you want to extend your business trip, take the time to put the proper provisions in place well before leaving so you are prepared for unforeseen accidents or emergencies whenever you are out of Canada.

Preparation is key to a successful trip. Aside from carrying your passport and obtaining the proper currency, remember to pack your travel insurance in your luggage as it is vital if you are going abroad. Travel insurance takes much of the stress out of unforeseen events such as a flight delay or cancellation, as well as protecting you against the often very high cost of medical treatment.

According to Telfer International Consultants Inc., International medical insurance specialists, here are 10 reasons why travel insurance is required:

1. Accidents or illnesses can happen to anyone, anywhere, anytime. All it takes is an unguarded moment or exposure to a harmful virus, and you or your family could be indebted for many years.
2. Some hospitals will not admit you unless you have insurance or can pay up front, regardless of your medical condition.
3. You cannot take Medicare for granted when working outside Canada, even for short periods. The Ontario government health plan (OHIP) will foot only a portion of the bills.
4. Your OHIP coverage may terminate after you have lived outside Canada for a certain period of time.
5. With certain exceptions, when you return to Canada there will be a wait of up to three months before you can benefit again from your OHIP.
6. A comprehensive travel insurance plan can help you leave a country, at no extra cost, in the event of a major medical emergency for which local facilities are inadequate.
7. Traveling to a country where war or civil unrest may require specialized insurance to ensure full protection.
8. If you decide to extend a business trip to take a holiday, you may need additional coverage besides your employer's policy.
9. If you plan to participate in any hazardous activity – scuba diving, parachuting, rock climbing, hiking, alpine skiing, etc. – check the limitations of your insurance coverage first.
10. Do not assume your Canadian automobile insurance or the coverage purchased with your rental vehicle will provide adequate protection in the event of an accident or theft.

Much of the coverage we take for granted in Canada is not available abroad. Make sure you know what coverage is in place before you drive.

The traditional way to buy travel insurance is to take out coverage for each trip. If you only make one or possibly two trips abroad a year, this may well be the best option. Through CanAm Insurance, via your insurance broker, they can provide single trip coverage that can be purchased up to 120 days in advance. However, a growing number of travelers are opting for annual travel insurance. So, if you were to purchase an annual policy this July, you would be covered by that policy for a twelve-month period.

In some situations you may also find that participation in a group insurance program through your employment may limit or eliminate the need to purchase additional travel or health coverage. For example, all persons enrolled in the national Chambers of Commerce Group Insurance Plan enjoy out-of-country medical coverage included in their policy. It is, however, best to check with your agent or insurer before you travel to be fully aware of any limits or situations that could cause concern.

If you love to travel, plan ahead! The extra packing and planning will save you grief and inconvenience in case of an unexpected accident as well as save you money.

This column appears regularly in Business Beat and has been prepared this month by Brad Lister, New Business Development Manager at Reith and Associates Insurance and Financial Services, 462 Talbot Street, St. Thomas. Questions and comments on this column are welcomed by the writer and 631-3862 or via e-mail: info@reithandassociates.com