



CONSUMERS' GUIDE TO PURCHASING PERSONAL AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE **TOP 10 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Automobile insurance is NOT about being “legal.” It is about being responsible. Insurance is about keeping your family SAFE from the financial disaster. Accidents are unpredictable, but the consequences are certain. The duty to protect your family is your responsibility!

Automobile insurance is NOT about price. It's about value. Paying the right price for the right insurance is better than paying a lower price for no insurance. In other words, if you paid something for something, you got something. If you paid anything for nothing, you paid too much.

This guide is based on my 30 plus years of experience as a personal injury attorney. During that time, I have spoken with thousands of people whose lives have been turned upside down as a result of automobile accidents. Many suffered serious injuries and couldn't work. They were worried that they wouldn't have the money to pay their medical bills, get the care they needed, or pay household expenses. Those who made responsible choices had peace of mind because they had the insurance they needed to continue their lives with minimal disruption. Regrettably, many found that they did not have the right insurance, and were shocked, angry and frustrated.

WHO SHOULD YOU TRUST?

Trust those whose interests are the same as yours. Insurance carriers and their agents do NOT have the same interests as you. Their number one goal is to sell you a policy. Paying benefits is the last thing they want to do. Therefore, what is good for you, receiving benefits, is not good for them, and what is good for them may not be good for you.

Also, when carriers compete on price, they often cut corners on coverage. Unfortunately, you may not know what corners they cut, or the importance of the coverage you didn't get until after you need it, but then it's too late.

My interests, on the other hand, are exactly the same as yours. I work on a percentage basis, so I only make money if you get money. What is good for you is good for me, and what is good for me is good for you. I fight the insurance companies to get you more. Insurance carriers fight me to pay you less.

TOP 10 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following list of my top 10 automobile insurance recommendations is based on my experience in helping people with their automobile injury claims. Past experience is no guarantee, however, of future insurance needs. Also, this guide is general in nature, and is not intended to provide specific legal advice with respect to your particular automobile insurance needs. Each person's needs are different and vary depending on their circumstances. Also, this list is not intended to be comprehensive, and there may be other coverages, or different limits that might be right for you.

1. GET FULL TORT.

CAUTION! "LIMITED TORT" TAKES AWAY IMPORTANT RIGHTS. CHECK YOUR POLICY TO MAKE SURE YOU PROTECTED YOUR RIGHTS BY CARRYING "FULL TORT" COVERAGE!

Full Tort should not be confused with "Full Coverage" which relates to coverage on your car. The best way to understand the term "Tort" is to substitute it for the word, "**RIGHTS.**" Full Tort means Full Rights, and Limited Tort means Limited Rights. The right that we are referring to is NOT the right to sue, because none of us want to sue. Rather, we are referring to the right that you and your family have to be fully and fairly compensated for all of the harm caused by a wrongful driver. The law recognizes that a person who suffers bodily harm suffers both economic and non-economic damages such as pain and suffering, inconvenience, embarrassment and loss of life's pleasures. People who purchase Limited Tort, waive their right to be fairly compensated for their non-economic damages. When people with Limited Tort call me for help after they or a family member has been injured in a car accident, they are shocked, frustrated and angry when they learn that they gave up their right to fair compensation for all of the pain and suffering that they or their family members are forced to endure.

One of the most important benefits that Full Tort coverage provides is the ability to hire an experienced personal injury lawyer. Personal injury lawyers work on a percentage basis, but a percentage of zero is zero. Therefore, a person with Limited Tort not only gives up their right to recover damages, but also the ability to hire a lawyer when they need one the most.

2. BODILY INJURY LIABILITY INSURANCE WITH LIMITS OF AT LEAST \$100,000.00 PER PERSON AND \$300,000.00 PER ACCIDENT.

Liability insurance protects your assets from judgments. It also protects your driving privileges because you can lose your license if you fail to pay a judgment arising from an auto accident in full. Pennsylvania law requires all owners of currently registered motor vehicles to have financial responsibility to pay damages in the minimum amounts of \$15,000.00 for personal injury caused to one person and \$30,000.00 for two or more persons in any one accident, and \$5,000.00 for property damage in any one accident. These limits were established over 25 years ago, and were inadequate then.

Also, your limit of liability insurance establishes the maximum amount of Uninsured and Underinsured motorist coverage you can purchase. The amount of harm you could suffer from an uninsured and underinsured drivers is unlimited. So, even if you don't have substantial assets to protect, you need to protect your risk of harm from uninsured or underinsured drivers.

I recommend limits of at least \$100,000.00 per person and \$300,000.00 per accident. Your circumstances may require higher limits, and it is understood that you may not be able to afford limits this high. The minimum limits are not clearly not adequate, however.

3. PROPERTY DAMAGE LIABILITY INSURANCE WITH LIMITS OF AT LEAST \$50,000.00.

The required minimum of \$5,000.00 for property damage liability will hardly pay for the tow.

I recommend limits of at least \$50,000.00 with the understanding that your circumstances may require higher limits, and it is understood that you may not be able to afford limits this high. The minimum limits are not clearly not adequate, however.

4. UNINSURED MOTORIST COVERAGE WITH LIMITS EQUAL TO YOUR BODILY INJURY LIABILITY LIMITS WITH STACKING.

CAUTION! THE AMOUNT OF HARM YOU COULD SUFFER FROM AN UNINSURED OR UNDERINSURED DRIVER IS UNLIMITED. CHECK YOUR POLICY TO MAKE SURE YOU ARE PROTECTED.

Uninsured and Underinsured Motorist Coverage pays your damages if the wrongful driver who caused your harm has no insurance or does not have adequate limits to pay all of your damages. The amount of harm you can suffer in an automobile accident is unlimited, but there are many people who are driving without any insurance at all, or who have the minimum limits of \$15,000.00 per person and \$30,000.00 per accident. Therefore, it is essential that you protect yourself with Uninsured and Underinsured Motorist coverage up to your limit of liability insurance coverage.

Uninsured and Underinsured Motorist coverage is not mandatory, and many insurance carriers and their agents will recommend that you waive this coverage or that you reduce your limits. I have had many cases in which my clients suffered permanent, disabling injuries where their agents recommended that they waive Uninsured and Underinsured Motorist coverage, or reduce their limits. This is what we call an insurance tragedy.

STACKING is your ability to increase your limits of Uninsured and Underinsured Motorist coverage by multiplying your limits by the number of cars in which you are insured. It is important to stack your coverage even if you only have one car on the policy because your first level of insurance is the car you are occupying at the time of the accident, and because there may be other cars in your household with separate policies that you can stack.

5. UNDERINSURED MOTORIST INSURANCE LIMITS EQUAL TO BODILY INJURY LIABILITY LIMITS WITH STACKING.

6. MEDICAL BENEFITS WITH LIMITS UP TO \$100,000.00.

All motor vehicle insurance policies issued in Pennsylvania are required to include medical benefits coverage with minimum limits of at least \$5,000.00. However, this limit was established over 25 years ago and has never been increased. Obviously, \$5,000.00 would not be sufficient to pay for medical treatment for even minor injuries.

I recommend increased medical limits even if you have good private health insurance because private health insurance policies often have high deductibles and/or co-pays, and don't pay for all types of reasonable treatments. Automobile insurance medical coverage pays for all reasonable and necessary medical treatment that is required because of an injuries in an automobile accident. Medical expense payments to medical providers are reduced in accordance with a formula set forth in the law, but the provider is generally not permitted to charge you for the difference.

I recommend limits of up to \$100,000.00 in medical coverage. It is possible to purchase higher limits through Extraordinary Medical Benefits discussed below. It is understood that you may not be able to afford limits this high. The minimum limits are not clearly not adequate, however.

7. EXTRAORDINARY MEDICAL BENEFITS FROM \$100,000.00 UP TO \$1,100,000.00

Again, I have had many cases with clients who have suffered permanent, disabling injuries that will require substantial medical benefits.

8. INCOME LOSS COVERAGE WITH LIMITS OF \$2,500.00 PER MONTH AND \$50,000.00 TOTAL.

If you are employed and depend on your paycheck to pay household expenses you need to carry insurance on your automobile insurance policy. Most private disability policies have long waiting periods and substantial limitations. Income loss coverage under an automobile insurance policy will pay up to the limit of coverage for up to 80% of income loss beginning on the 6th day of disability. The maximum limit is \$2,500.00 per month and \$50,000.00.

9. GAP INSURANCE ON THE VALUE OF YOUR CAR.

This is a coverage that may be appropriate if you financed the purchase of your car. If your car is a total loss the insurance carrier is only required to pay the fair market value of the car, which may be less than the amount you owe on the car. Gap insurance pays this difference. Many people fail to consider this type of coverage.

10. COLLISION, COMPREHENSIVE AND RENTAL CAR COVERAGE.

Collision and Comprehensive coverage and the amount of your deductibles is highly dependent on the age and value of your vehicle, and your ability to pay losses. Rental car coverage is recommended.

NOTE: You can purchase funeral benefits of up to \$2,500.00, and accidental death benefits of up to \$25,000.00 under your automobile insurance policy. These coverages may be appropriate to your circumstances, but I recommend that you compare the cost of a term life policy.

DISCLAIMER:

This guide is general in nature, and is not intended to provide legal advice with respect to your particular automobile insurance needs. Each person's needs are different and will vary depending on their circumstances. Therefore, you should contact an experienced personal injury attorney to discuss your specific insurance needs. I and many other personal injury attorneys don't charge for their time to speak with you about your automobile insurance needs. Ultimately, the coverage you choose is your personal choice. My interests are the same as yours, to help you make the right choices.