



Travel Insurance Can Protect Your Summer Plans

By John D. Doak, Oklahoma Insurance Commissioner

School's out, days are longer and temperatures are on the rise. That means summer is nearly upon us and, for many of you, time for a vacation. Long before you hit the open road or book your flights to the beach, remember something important to add to your planning checklist: travel insurance. Here is some important to help you prepare for financial losses that can come with travel.

There are four types of travel insurance.

Research and understand the types of policies that are available to you. The four major types are: travel health insurance, medical evacuation insurance, trip cancellation insurance and property insurance.

Medical health:

- Medical/Health – Reimburses you for medical and emergency dental expenses caused by an illness or injury while you're traveling. This typically does not allow for known illnesses or pre-existing conditions.
- Accidental Death – This coverage usually has three options:
 1. Air Flight Accident – Covers death or dismemberment during flight only.
 2. Common Carrier – Covers death or dismemberment while traveling on public transportation.
 3. Accidental Death – Covers death or dismemberment at any time during a trip.

Medical evacuation:

- Provides emergency transportation to a hospital near your vacation destination or to a hospital near your home.

Trip cancellation:

- Trip Cancellation – Reimburses you for pre-paid travel expenses if you aren't able to take your trip because you or a family member gets sick or dies.
- Travel Delay – Reimburses you for pre-paid expenses if you aren't able to take your trip because of a travel delay, such as a flight delay or cancellation.

- Trip Interruption – Reimburses you for pre-paid expenses if your trip is cut short because you, or a family member, become ill or die, or because of any other misfortune listed in the policy, such as bad weather, airline strikes, terrorism, bankruptcy, jury duty or fire or flood damage to your home.

Property insurance:

- Baggage Loss – Reimburses you for lost, stolen or damaged personal items, but doesn't usually cover personal items that may be lost or damaged by an airline. Be sure to review the policy for property that isn't covered and check to see if any of your items exceed the limits allowed.
- Rental Car Damage – Reimburses you for damage or loss to a rental vehicle, but it does not provide liability protection. If you have this coverage, you may decline the "collision damage waiver" rental car companies offer. Remember to check your auto insurance policy before purchasing this type of coverage as your current policy may already cover you if your rental car is stolen or damaged in an accident.

How much should you pay?

Costs will vary but, generally, you can expect to spend between four and 10 percent of the total trip cost. For example, if your trip costs \$5,000, insurance may cost you between \$200 and \$500. The key is to not lack any protection, but not be excessive and unnecessary. If the cost of the policy is unrealistically low, you may also be dealing with a scam.

Don't be afraid to ask questions when policy shopping.

Make sure you understand the specifics of what is covered and what is not. Travel policies are not all the same and the coverage will strictly adhere to the terms of the contract. Review the policy and make sure to check the list of covered reasons for canceling your trip. Ask about pre-existing conditions and age limits. Some policies cover pre-existing conditions if you buy the coverage within a certain amount of time after booking your trip and others won't cover them at all.

Before you purchase, it is important to review the insurance policies you already have, such as life, health and homeowners insurance. Read your policies and learn what personal property and medical coverage you already have while you're traveling. If you use a credit card to pay for the trip, check to see if there are insurance benefits.

No insurance policy can guarantee safety when you're traveling, but the added protection to your vacation investment may afford some peace of mind and come in handy if the unexpected happens. For more insurance tips, visit the Oklahoma Insurance Department online at <http://www.ok.gov/oid/> or call Consumer Assistance at 1-800-522-0071.