Ohio increases minimum auto liability limits

Ohio Governor John Kasich has signed legislation that will increase the state financial responsibility minimum requirements for auto insurance.

Financial responsibility laws require that all drivers show proof that they can pay damages up to a minimum amount if involved in an auto accident. The laws can be met by carrying a minimum amount of auto liability insurance. For example, personal auto insurance financial responsibility limits of 25/50/10 would mean coverage up to $50,000 for all persons injured in an accident, subject to a limit of $25,000 for one individual, and $10,000 coverage for property damage.

Ohio’s new minimum limits will increase as follows:

- The per-person bodily injury liability limit will increase from $12,500 to $25,000;
- The minimum per-accident bodily injury liability limit will increase from $25,000 to $50,000
- The minimum property damage liability limit will increase from $7,500 to $25,000.

These new minimum financial responsibility limits must be in effect on all auto insurance policies renewed or issued on or after December 22, 2013.

Ohio’s minimum limits have not been changed in 43 years and were among the lowest in the nation. Although premiums will increase somewhat, these higher minimum limits will provide much greater protection for Ohio’s drivers and vehicle occupants. The current minimum requirements could leave drivers vulnerable in the unfortunate case of an accident. Most drivers in Ohio already carry higher than minimum liability limits. Those who do not will need to raise their coverage amounts to meet the new standards.

To assist our policyholders with this transition, Wayne Mutual will increase those with 15/30/10 or 25/50/10 limits to 25/50/25 limits when the policy renews on October 1, 2013 or later.

What could happen if you get into an accident and only have minimum coverage? If the damage in the accident exceeds your policy limits, you could be held legally responsible to pay for any damages that are not covered by your insurance, including medical costs, costs to repair any property damage and legal costs.

Having additional coverage can help protect you in the event of a serious accident. The law allows a victim to take your assets to cover the costs of any damages that occur. Therefore, the value of your assets (what you may have to lose in the event you cause an accident) can help you determine the amount of coverage you should carry.

If you would prefer higher limits than the new state minimums, or if you wish to switch to higher limits prior to your renewal, please contact your Wayne Mutual agent for assistance.

Online payment option launched for Wayne Insurance Group

Wayne Mutual and Washington Mutual policyholders now have the option to pay their bill online from the company websites.

The online payment option will allow you to pay your bill from the comfort of your home. Simply visit one of our company websites and click the “Make a Payment” button on the home page. After you enter your policy number and mailing ZIP code, you will have the option to pay by credit/debit card or directly from your checking account. The amount due will be displayed, followed by a box where you can enter the amount you wish to pay. You will still be able to call in or mail your payment if you choose.

You also have the option of signing up for EFT payment (Electronic Funds Transfer). EFT is a simplified way to pay your bill. Wayne Insurance Group will draw payments directly from your checking, savings or credit union account every month. Your insurance bill is automatically paid on time, conveniently and with no hassle. You would no longer have to write checks, EFT does not collect a service charge and you don’t have to worry about forgotten payments, late payments or risk of cancelation.

The existing payment rules for Wayne Mutual and Washington Mutual will still apply.
Marion Mutual joins the Wayne Insurance Group

Marion Mutual Insurance Association of Cassella in Mercer County, Ohio, has signed an affiliation agreement with the Wayne Mutual Insurance Company of Wooster. The agreement, which has been approved by the Ohio Department of Insurance, authorizes the existing Wayne Mutual board of directors and company officers to lead both companies. As a result, Marion Mutual has become the latest member of the Wayne Insurance Group.

“Marion Mutual has a well-deserved reputation for providing dependable insurance solutions,” said Tod J. Carmony, who serves as chairman, chief executive officer and president of the Wayne Insurance Group. “We are pleased to have the opportunity to join forces with the talented, dedicated staff at Marion Mutual. Working together, we can expand our capabilities to better meet the insurance needs of our policyholders.”

Marion Mutual provides insurance protection for farms, homes, mobile homes, dwellings, personal property, livestock, machinery and other valuable items. Founded in 1881 as the Marion Mutual Insurance Association of Mercer County, the company was initially located in St. Rose and issued its policies in German. Marion Mutual relocated to its current location in Cassella in 1972 and, in 2010, the company shortened its name to reflect its broader reach into surrounding counties. Marion Mutual remains a mutual company owned by its policyholders.

“This affiliation is a well-timed move for our company, our policyholders and our agents,” said Sue M. Swartz, general manager of Marion Mutual. “By uniting with another successful insurance organization like the Wayne Insurance Group, we will better position our company to provide the dependable protection, effective partnerships and creative solutions our policyholders expect.”

With the affiliation now approved, the two companies will begin working closely together, but will continue to operate as separate entities. The Marion Mutual office in Cassella will remain the headquarters of the company and will continue to provide personalized customer service and support.

Other members of the group are Wayne Mutual and Washington Mutual. Wayne Mutual Insurance Company has provided property & casualty insurance to Ohio residents since 1910. In 2009, Washington Mutual Insurance Association signed an affiliation agreement with Wayne Mutual, leading to the formation of the Wayne Insurance Group. Headquartered in Wooster, the group markets its products and services through a statewide network of more than 140 independent agencies.

Check valves prevent water damage

Heavy rains or spring snow melts can result in water backing up through basement drains. Backups can also be caused when storm water floods municipal drainage systems or when drain lines are plugged by waste, tree roots, breaks in the pipe or saturated ground. A simple do-it-yourself installation of a check valve can be used to prevent significant water damage when backups occur.

A check valve is designed to allow water or liquids to flow in only one direction. They are generally small and inexpensive. Installing a check valve in your basement drain will prevent water or sewage from flowing out of the drain and into your basement. Check valves can be purchased at your local home supply store. Make certain you follow the manufacturer’s instructions to ensure proper installation.

Ohio’s texting and driving ban

Ohio’s new texting and driving ban is now in effect. Ohio is the 39th state to ban texting and driving but it is the first state to enact a law that makes it illegal for minors to use any handheld device. The new Ohio distracted driving laws have two levels of enforcement. For all adults (18 and over), this is a secondary enforcement, which means that the police must find another reason to stop potential violators, such as weaving or speeding. For those who are under the age of 18 and are caught texting, using their cell phone or any other portable electronic device, it will be considered a primary offense. Fines for adults will be $150. Teens caught violating the law will receive a $150 fine and a 60-day suspension of their license. For those who acquire multiple violations, fines can reach $300 with the possibility of a one-year driver’s license suspension.

The law does provide several exceptions from enforcement for all drivers:

- Calling or texting for emergencies, including calls to hospitals, police, 911, fire departments.
- Drivers are permitted to use a voice-operated or hands-free navigation system.
- Parking outside a lane of travel exempts drivers from the ban.