

Don't Stand Alone When Trouble Strikes



"What's your cheapest rate for insuring my sled?" Many snowmobilers will be asking that question this fall as they look to pay a rock bottom premium for their sled insurance. But for most of us, a far smarter question to ask is: "What's the best sled insurance I can get to make sure my livelihood and other assets are well protected?"

Why? Look at the facts. Our average age is 43. Our average household income is \$65,000. 88% of us own our own home and 35% own cottages. Generally, we snowmobilers have good jobs, strong future earning potential and many growing assets. Most of us also have something even more important – loved ones who depend on us. In short, the majority of snowmobilers have a whole lot to lose.

Yet many of us buy the cheapest sled insurance available. That's like playing Russian Roulette with our lives and those we love. Especially as our Canadian society becomes increasingly litigious. Like the U.S. is already, with everybody suing anybody at the drop of a hat. The cost of just defending a claim can be very steep, much less having to pay out if I lose.

So buying cheap insurance may be putting everything we love and own at risk, betting that nothing serious will happen while we snowmobile. But if something does happen – and we can't control how others ride their sleds or how Mother Nature behaves – then we may end up in big, big trouble.

I don't like paying insurance premiums anymore than you do. I feel like I'm dropping hard earned money into a bottomless bucket where I'll never see it again. Or at least not until something happens...

Last spring I had three consecutive floods in my basement. I've had the house for more than

30 years with no previous problem. My insurer, York Fire & Casualty, took care of everything, from hiring a great contractor to paying all the restoration bills.

That got me thinking about insurance overall. I arrived at several conclusions. One, having the right insurance coverage in place for every asset is crucial. It's far more important than cutting corners to save a few bucks. Two, being insured with a reputable, accessible company is essential. When crisis strikes, I want someone who is on my side, not an adversary. And three, working through an experienced broker who knows me and my needs is a huge asset. Mine is Brent Murphy (Murphy Insurance, Barrie). Brent's both an avid snowmobiler and an insurance expert. His insight, advice and contacts were invaluable to me while I was considering building an ark. I can't imagine having to deal with all the issues related to a large claim through some anonymous call centre.


From a snowmobiling perspective, my insurance episode also has implications. As my flooding proved, something bad and unexpected can happen at any time, despite my best efforts. I ride a lot of kilometres each winter, but I probably haven't taken buying my sled insurance seriously enough. It's tempting to buy stand-alone sled insurance, and I have in the past. Not any more, because I'm thinking that standing alone is exactly where I'll be if trouble strikes and spreads like a virus to my earnings and assets.

Now buying my sled insurance occurs through Brent, along with all of my other personal and commercial insurance needs. This way, I can ensure that all my various and complicated coverages are proper, integrated and seamless, with no unneeded overlaps and no coverage gaps or surprises down the line. Sure, I also benefit from the discounts associated with placing all my policies with one provider, but the big advantage

for me is the time saver of only having to deal with one office, not multiple faceless contacts or being placed endlessly on hold. Besides, like everything else, insurance has become so complicated and with so many variables and options, that I need high-powered help to understand what I am buying and why.

My playtime on a snowmobile is very important to me, and I sure don't have enough of it. So I want to ride with the peace of mind of knowing that I'm fully covered and not jeopardizing everything for fun. Even more, my family needs to know that my playtime can't put them in the poor house if something unfortunate happens. My Ford Expedition tow vehicle isn't cheap. My Triton snowmobile trailer isn't either. Nor is my Ski-Doo GTX SE 1200 4-TEC sled. So why would I want to cheap out on my insurance?

Every sled insurance policy is not the same. To get the coverage you need to protect your family and assets, my recommendation is to find a broker who knows snowmobiling, will take the time to plan the big picture of what you and yours really need to be safe and secure, and then who will help you implement that plan at the best possible price.

It's called personal risk management and if every Ontario rider took their sled insurance more seriously, we would be all the better for it. 

- Craig Nicholson, OFSC Communications

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