

Important Notice: Read Your Policy!

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Quote: "The physician who doctors himself has a fool for a patient."
~ *Sir William Osler*

How often have you seen that Important Notice? Well, you DO read your insurance policies, right? And you're careful to check the dates, limits, new exclusions and limitations, right?

If so, you just might be the only one: most of the people I meet don't.

Why is that?—

- The language is usually too difficult: the hereins, theretofores, and circular references can be overwhelming; an exception to an exclusion may mean more coverage – but then here come three caveats ... oh, boy....
- The concepts are often too complex: just what is a hostile fire exception to a total pollution exclusion, and why is it required in your lease?
- Folks think it's a waste of time because they'll never understand; and they're in denial (no, not boating in Egypt), saying or hoping, "It'll never happen to me."

How important can it be?

- These are contracts! They protect some of your most important assets.
- You signed it! Business people are *expected* to understand – or get help.
- In court, contract law trumps tort law all the time. It's real hard – and expensive - to argue that you didn't get it.

What can you do?

You know I'll say, "You gotta do this," even though it's not easy. Insurance has become way too complex for most people to handle on their own.

Start with the basics:

- Insist that your broker go over the key points (coverages, limits, exclusions) with you every year – preferably in person and with a prepared, written coverage summary. (See [RiskSmart Tip #2](#), Broker Service.)
- Read, highlight and double check key dates, names, values, limits, etc. on your Declarations pages and your Schedules for property, equipment and autos.
- Read the "Forms List" and make sure you have copies of them all; highlight the titles you don't understand.
- Email your broker and ask, "Please explain what the XYZ endorsement is all about and what that means for my business." Get the answer in writing and file it with your policy papers.

You say you don't have a broker? Or he/she won't do this? So, you *are* handling all this by yourself? Refer again to the quote above and stay tuned: this will be the subject of another Tip.