

## Protect yourself from the 'other guy' who's driving uninsured or underinsured.

### Are you protecting everyone but yourself?

There are many drivers who don't carry as much auto insurance coverage as you do. There are other drivers who aren't insured at all. If you were seriously injured in an accident caused by one of these drivers, you could face financial disaster.

### What would you do if you could collect only \$25,000 on a \$100,000 auto accident verdict because the other driver was uninsured or had a smaller policy than yours?

You'd pay for that driver's lack of insurance. Even though the other driver is at fault, it's unlikely you could recover enough from the negligent driver to compensate you adequately for your loss. The result?

- You could become permanently disabled, unable to work and still collect only \$25,000 due to the other driver's negligence-no matter how large your claim.
- If you die as a result of your injuries, your family would face the same problem-how to collect a judgment against the at-fault driver.

### What does my present policy cover?

If you have a New York auto insurance policy, you already have at least a small amount of uninsured motorist coverage, as mandated bylaw. It protects you and your passengers if you're involved in an accident with a car that is not insured and the operator of the uninsured vehicle is declared legally responsible for your injuries. (The coverage also protects you if you are injured by a hit-and-run driver, or by a stolen or unregistered vehicle.)

But, unless you have already chosen the option explained in this article, you still face the problem of collecting a fair settlement against a driver who injured you but lacks adequate insurance. That's because your minimum uninsured motorist coverage only protects you up to the lowest limits required by law which are 25/50.25/50 means an insurance company will pay a maximum of \$25,000 for any one injured person per accident or a maximum of \$50,000 for two or more persons injured in any one accident. This minimum coverage is higher [50/1001 in the event of fatal injuries.)

If you settle for this minimum coverage, you could find that your policy is protecting others from your negligence-but not protecting you from theirs!

Even if the other driver does have insurance, remember the law only requires someone to carry minimum bodily injury liability limits of 25/50. This means you could only collect \$25,000 per person (\$50,000 maximum) from such a driver's insurance company, regardless of the number of injured people in your car, and no matter what the size of your claim. Approximately one driver out of every five who passes you on the road buys only the minimum insurance or has no insurance at all.

### What can I do to protect myself?

New York law requires your insurance company to offer you supplementary uninsured/underinsured (SUM) motorist coverage. This coverage means:

- You can obtain a level of protection for yourself and your passengers equal to what you purchase to protect yourself against liability for injury to others.
- You can protect yourself against drivers with minimum insurance or no insurance at all.
- You can purchase SUM coverage with limits up to, but not exceeding, your own bodily injury liability limits as specified in your auto insurance policy. For instance, if your policy's liability limits are 50/100, you can also purchase SUM coverage with limits up to 50/100.

### Is there a limit to the amount of SUM protection I can buy?

Your insurance company must offer you SUM limits as high as \$500,000 for a single accident, but may include a sub limit of \$250,000 for each person injured or killed in the same accident.

## **How does "uninsured" coverage work?**

In addition to uninsured motorists, SUM protects you against underinsured drivers. Suppose you are alone in your car and are involved in an accident with a car covered by liability insurance with limits of 25/50. Your own liability limits are 50/100, and you have purchased the option of SUM coverage in the amount of 50/100. As a result of injuries you sustained in this accident, you have a bona fide claim of \$45,000 and the other driver is declared legally liable to pay this amount for your injuries. Because of the other driver's low limits, his insurance company can pay you only \$25,000. Your underinsured motorists coverage will pick up the difference-in this case, \$20,000 allowing you to collect on the entire claim.

## **What does the additional coverage cost?**

The cost for this additional coverage is substantially less than for similar amounts of liability insurance, and depends on the amount of protection you select. Contact our agency for cost information on this important coverage.

Your Professional Insurance Agent ... We want you to know about the insurance you're buying.

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