11 WAYS TO LOWER YOUR HOMEOWNERS INSURANCE RATE

While it's something you hope you never need to use, home insurance is an essential expense that is required by all mortgage lenders and can protect you and your family from disaster. However, this doesn't mean you have to pay top dollar to get the coverage you need.

DOWNLOAD THIS LIST OF MONEY-SAVING ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE TO REDUCE YOUR HOMEOWNERS INSURANCE RATES. IF YOU THINK YOU'RE STILL PAYING TOO MUCH FOR YOUR HOME INSURANCE AFTER IMPLEMENTING THESE SUGGESTIONS, REACH OUT FOR FURTHER GUIDANCE.

1

INCREASE YOUR DEDUCTIBLE.

The higher your deductible, the lower your insurance rate will be. But think carefully before making this change. Since you will need to pay the deductible before your insurance carrier will pay anything, you could be out a big chunk of money if a need arises. Always think about what might go wrong and the associated potential costs when choosing your deductible.

2

BUY A NEWER HOME.

You'll pay higher insurance premiums for older homes because they're outdated. Aged electrical wiring, plumbing, and roofing—plus the presence of a septic system—are only a few of the things an insurer will consider. Features like plaster walls and hardwood floors are more expensive to replace than drywall and more modern flooring options. If you can't afford a newer home, or simply prefer the styles of older ones, look for a house with concrete, stone, or brick construction, which are less vulnerable to fire and natural disasters than wood construction.

3

AVOID PURCHASING IN A DISASTER-PRONE LOCATION.

You'll pay more if you purchase a home in an area prone to wildfires, floods, high winds, earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, or tropical storms. Also expect higher insurance rates in areas with higher or increasing crime rates.

4

MAINTAIN A GOOD CREDIT SCORE.

When setting your premium, insurance companies will consider your credit score—specifically your ability to pay your bills on time—your outstanding debt, and your credit history. Additionally, if you have previously made a claim against your home insurance (even if it was for a former home), that claim will be a part of your history, meaning it will follow you and influence the rate you receive. Therefore, it's in your long-term interest not to file unnecessary claims.

5

SELECT HOME REMODELING AND IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS WITH CARE.

Additions, upgrades, and improvements to your home, such as a new deck or additional rooms, increase its value, and that new value will need to be reflected in your homeowners policy. Worthy of special consideration is the installation of a pool, hot tub, playground set, trampoline, or other potentially hazardous "attractive nuisance." If someone is injured, you may be held liable—and carriers will reflect that potential liability in your rate.

6

ENHANCE YOUR HOME'S SECURITY.

Anything that makes your home more secure—whether it be against Mother Nature, intruders, or in-home hazards—will typically result in a more favorable home insurance rate. More security will not only make it more difficult for thieves to steal your belongings (lowering your risk) but also give you more peace of mind. Let your carrier know if you have installed a monitored security system, replaced old locks, reinforced deadbolts, or added a video doorbell, and you may see a dip in your premium. Consider also investing in water leak detection systems, sensors for gas leaks and freezing pipes, impact-resistant windows, storm shutters, and reinforced garage doors.

7 **CONSULT WITH YOUR CARRIER BEFORE ADDING A PET TO YOUR FAMILY.**

It may not be fair, but many home insurance providers consider certain dog breeds to be at higher risk for aggression and biting someone. Some companies have policies that preclude offering insurance to owners of these breeds while others will quote higher rates. Also be aware that any dog with a history of bites or attacks, regardless of the breed, will result in a higher cost. You may also encounter higher costs if you own an exotic pet, such as a snake or potbellied pig.

8 **STEER CLEAR OF WOOD-BURNING OR PELLET STOVES.**

Wood-burning and pellet stoves are efficient and add a pleasant aesthetic to many homes, but they are an inherent fire hazard and, therefore, an added risk that an insurance carrier will account for in your rate. They can also lead to a risk of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning if not properly installed and maintained. If you have one of these stoves, it may help you get a price break if a licensed professional did the installation and you have the necessary fire, smoke, and CO detectors or if you have a fire extinguisher.

9 **IDENTIFY WHERE THE NEAREST FIRE STATION IS LOCATED.**

Because time is of the essence when a fire threatens your home, being located close to a fire station means firefighters can arrive more quickly and possibly be able to reduce damage and loss. Insurance companies consider this, along with proximity to a fire hydrant, as pluses and may reduce your rate.

10 **ASK ABOUT ADDITIONAL DISCOUNTS.**

You won't know if an insurance company has additional discounts if you don't ask. When shopping for home insurance, ask for reduced rates if you: don't have smokers living in the house; can pay for your premium with automatic bank payments or select paperless billing or pay in full; work in education, healthcare or the military or are a first responder or veteran; or bundle your car and home insurance.

11 **SHOP AROUND.**

Before choosing a home insurance policy, shop different companies because not all of them will charge the same premium for the same policy. Once you find a company with the coverage you want at an attractive rate you can afford, consider sticking with them for a few years—insurance companies will sometimes reward loyal customers with reductions to their premiums. Still, every now and then, it's not a bad idea to explore rates offered by other carriers.

Implementing these suggestions should help to lower your home insurance rate. If you still aren't satisfied, reach out to make sure you're getting the coverage you need at a competitive rate you can afford.