



Hathaway
Financial
Services



Being Robbed, Insurance & Why My Barking Dog is of No Help!

We all buy insurance with the hope we will never have to file a claim, and if we do, we hope that it will provide for us as expected. The reality is that many of us will eventually file insurance claims, and when we do, there is a high likelihood that we will be surprised to find that our reimbursement expectations often exceed reality.

In March, my husband and I were put to the test when we came home to a robbed and ransacked house. The thieves quickly and adeptly knocked out our front door window and unlocked the deadbolt. **Lesson #1: Don't expect an un-keyed inside**

deadbolt to provide much protection if it is near a window. We were lucky in that our house was not terribly trashed, and that the culprits were in a hurry. They never even opened my jewelry drawer, although they did take some irreplaceable family heirlooms, and of course, every electronic device they could stuff in their backpacks. Fortunately for us, some of our items were found when a police officer on a drug bust noticed an excess of over-stuffed suitcases and started investigating. Unfortunately, most of our stolen items were already sold off by then.

At the time of the robbery, we called the police, who came out in a timely fashion and took the police report. We then started the time-consuming and arduous process of filing our claim with the insurance company. We were assigned a point person who worked specifically with us, which was nice since we didn't have to get a new person up to speed every time we had questions. We were sent a form to identify our stolen items, and here is where the going got dicey. Who out there has a photographic memory and can walk through their house and notice every item that is suddenly not there? Certainly not me, as I came to find out. We actually found one item we had no idea was missing while going through evidence at the police station! **Lesson #2: take the time to create a thorough home inventory, and keep it somewhere safe. Take it out at regular intervals and update it.** If you really want to be accurate, hire a firm that specializes in home inventories to do it for you. Our insurance company required: a detailed description of the item, serial numbers, when it was purchased, a sales receipt and/or a picture of the item. Completing this document took a lot of time and effort. For instance, we lost most of our motorcycle gear, items which we no longer had receipts for. To be complete, we sent in pictures of us standing in front of the motorcycle fully leathered up. This felt a bit strange, and could feel like an invasion of privacy to some. **Lesson #3: Ask your insurance company what information they will require for their claim process.**

After completing and submitting our list of stolen and damaged items, our insurance company processed our claim. For many items, especially electronics, they don't fully reimburse you for the replacement cost of the item. Instead, they send you an amount consistent with your policy terms, with the remaining amount to be sent to you after you re-purchase the item and send them proof of purchase. I lost my IPAD, but I wasn't really crazy about my IPAD, for which I paid \$829. The only thing I really used on my IPAD was the e-books, so I decided I would buy some other, less expensive, type of e-reader. The insurance company reimbursed me \$663 (to reflect depreciation of the item), so I essentially lost out on the other \$166 of my claim by not buying a new one. For other items we did replace, we were given the lesser depreciation amount, then reimbursed the full replacement cost once we sent in the receipt. **Lesson #4: make sure you know what your insurance covers and what is excluded. For those items not insured, consider a rider to insure them and make sure you have a recent appraisal.** Common items not insured: furs, coins, art, expensive jewelry, etc.

Meanwhile, the police and County Attorneys office processed our case, and it went to trial. We were asked to speak at the trial, and discovered that we could file a claim for any items not covered by insurance. That claim follows the defendants for 50 years and can be collected if the defendant comes into money in any way, such as earnings, inheritance, etc. Nice to know this criminal act really does haunt the perpetrators for life. I learned other interesting things from the police such as: having dogs in the home generally is not a deterrent, they are often found in the bathroom behind a shut door. My dogs, both avid and loud barkers were outside in the backyard. Also, if you utilize a home safe, make sure it is one that is too heavy (500 lbs.) to be picked up. Robbers have no problem taking lighter safes away with them, to be destroyed later.

Our home now has a full security system, something I had been planning on getting for years, but put off due to cost concerns. Our system had no up-front cost, just a monthly cost of \$55. We

have an alarm on every door and window, a motion detector, and glass-break sensors for all our large picture windows. The alarm is linked to our cell phones and email, and we can arm or disarm it anywhere. We are sent messages anytime it is armed or disarmed. Because we have windows on our doors, we now have double-sided keyed dead bolts on these doors. If you decide to install double-sided dead bolts you must make sure to hide a key nearby, so that if you need to get out of the house in the middle of the night, you can easily find them in a groggy state. We have locks on all gates leading into our backyard, (EWEB will provide you with one of their locks so they can still access your yard). I am still working on that safe, but the heavy ones (500lbs) cost up to \$1,000. In the interim, I keep valuables at my bank safe, and have a very special hiding place at home for those items I want to keep at home. We also added to our existing outdoor motion detection lighting.

While I hope we will never be robbed again, I can't guarantee against it, but I can take precautions. Yes, they are somewhat annoying, and yes, it takes some getting use to, but we are settling in again and feeling satisfied with our system, and optimistic that it will prevent us from having to experience this again. If we do, we now know the process and will be better prepared.

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