

# More Generous Savings Provisions for Retirement Planning in 2022

By [Sarah Ruef-Lindquist, JD, CTFA](#)

In 2022, retirement contribution limits for 401(k) and other types of defined contribution plans (403(b), 457 and Thrift Savings plans) will increase \$1,000 to \$20,500 for those under age 50, and for those 50 and older to \$27,000.

This amount is \$1,000 higher than it has been and is great news for retirement savers. Taking advantage of plans that allow taxpayers to make pre-tax contributions that then are treated as tax-deferred until withdrawn in retirement is a smart part of retirement planning.

Pre-tax contributions reduce your tax liability because the amount of the contribution is deducted from gross income. The retirement account is not taxed on any income or capital gain as long as funds remain in the IRA, with the exception of amounts withdrawn. Those are taxed as ordinary income. Taxes can be delayed to age 72, when annual minimum distributions are required to begin. Then income tax is due on withdrawals.

There is no change in the contribution limit for Individual Retirement Accounts (IRA's). That amount remains at \$6,000 for those under age 50, and \$7,000 for those age 50 and older. The amount has not changed since 2019.

Other recent legislation allows people to continue to make contributions after age 70, as long as they have income of at least the amount of the contribution.

More workers may now qualify for Roth IRA contributions, based on income phaseouts that are rising \$4,000 (\$129,000 – \$144,000) for single filers and rising \$6,000 (\$204,000 – \$214,000) for married filing jointly.

Be sure to check with your tax preparer or financial advisor about how any changes in the laws regarding retirement savings and planning impact your particular situation.

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## **Financial Guidance for Recent Widows: What Women Should Know After the Death of a Spouse**

In a 2019 UBS Investor Watch Survey, nearly 68 percent of married women from around the world reported they believe they'll outlive their spouse. And it's a belief that's grounded in reality—according to U.S. Census data, women are expected to live longer than men by roughly four years by 2060. What are the implications of this when it comes to money matters? It means that many women will find themselves responsible for making financial decisions on their own—and potentially for several years—if their spouse passes before them.

The UBS study also revealed that 76 percent of widows wish they had been more involved in making financial decisions when their spouse was alive. The unfortunate reality is that for many women dealing with the devastating grief of losing their spouse, things become even more challenging as they try to process the flood of financial burdens that come their way. While it may be tempting to push money concerns to the back burner if you find

yourself in this situation, there are immediate and lasting financial tasks you'll need to navigate. Here are some things to keep in mind.

### **Homing In on Your Finances**

You're in the middle of experiencing a heartbreaking event—it's possible you may find yourself unprepared to handle the torrent of financial matters falling in your lap. This may be especially true if your spouse was the primary financial planner and investment decision maker in your family. If you're feeling overwhelmed by financial planning considerations, start by focusing your attention on these topics.

**Estate administration.** It's important to obtain several copies of your spouse's death certificate. You'll also want to review the status of any existing estate planning documents. Keep in mind, maintaining a list of assets and accounts on an ongoing basis will streamline the estate administration and ultimate distribution of your spouse's assets in the event of their death.

Contacting the appropriate institutions is a good starting point for knowing what documentation is required to transfer and distribute these assets. Additionally, you may want to familiarize yourself with details such as the 50 percent—or, if you live in one of the nine community property states, 100 percent—cost basis step-up on the value of assets.

**Short-term finances.** After you've finalized your spouse's estate, you'll want to start thinking about short-term finances based on your change in situation. For example, you may need to adjust your monthly and yearly budget as well as spending habits. As you evaluate your income needs, keep in mind the social security survivor's benefit on a deceased spouse's record is available as early as age 60 to widows who are not disabled.

Disabled widows can receive a survivor's benefit as early as age 50. This can create an early income stream, even though you may not be eligible to begin your own benefit until age 62. (Note that benefit reductions will likely apply for early claiming.)

There are a few things you should know about the social security survivor's benefit, including that it's separate from one you may be entitled to receive based on your own earnings record. Additionally, as the surviving spouse, you can decide when to take your survivor's benefit versus your own. If your own retirement benefit will be greater than the survivor benefit after the addition of the 8 percent per year delayed claim credit, you could collect the survivor benefit first and then switch to your own benefit at age 70.

If your spouse was the primary wage earner and held life insurance, this can provide another immediate source of income for you. Having a listing of the policies in place can quicken the payout process. If your spouse was still employed at the time of death, be sure to contact their employer about group policies that may also provide a death benefit.

**Long-term finances.** In addition to getting a handle on your immediate financial needs, you'll want to think about planning for your long-term financial stability as well. Be sure to review and update your estate plans and beneficiary designations and understand the various health care options available to you (including Medicare and long-term care insurance). It's important to share your long-term care wishes with those closest to you. While these discussions may be very difficult, it's important to make loved ones aware of any specific preferences you may have relating to end-of-life medical decisions and funeral arrangements for yourself.

**Look Ahead and Take Early Action**

Managing your finances can be a complex task under any circumstances, never mind when you're grieving. You can rely on us as a resource to help you talk through your options and find solutions that work best for you. We're happy to help guide you on decisions regarding estate planning, emergency savings, life insurance, and health care, as well as other advanced planning strategies that can protect you against a loss of income. By taking steps to gain a more comprehensive view of your finances, you can position yourself for a stable financial future.

This material has been provided for general informational purposes only and does not constitute either tax or legal advice. Although we go to great lengths to make sure our information is accurate and useful, we recommend you consult a tax preparer, professional tax advisor, or lawyer.

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## **Leann Cailler Earns Safeco Insurance® Award of Distinction**

[Leann Cailler, ACSR, CPIA,](#) a personal insurance account executive with Allen Insurance and Financial, has earned the Safeco Insurance Award of Distinction and has been named a producer of the year for 2021.

This recognition is achieved only by a select group of agents across the country who sell Safeco Insurance.

“Leann takes the time to explain coverages and insurance

products so our clients can make the decision to best protects their home, vehicle and family,” said Scott Carlson, manager of the personal insurance division at Allen Insurance and Financial. “Leann and the entire Allen personal insurance team strive to help create great outcomes for our clients. This recognition is the result of a lot of hard work and is well deserved. We’re all very proud of Leann’s accomplishment.”

The Safeco Award of Distinction honors outstanding agents who have developed a solid partnership with Safeco. Only 150 agents nationwide earn this award.

Cailler, of Waldoboro, has been with Allen Insurance and Financial since 2007. She holds both the Accredited Customer Service representative (ACSR) and Certified Professional Insurance Agent (CPIA) designations.

Allen Insurance and Financial is a multi-year President’s Award and Premier Partner agency, recognition given only to the best independent insurance agencies that sell Safeco. Safeco is a Liberty Mutual Insurance company.

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# **Timely Insurance Considerations**

Cale Pickford, Allen Insurance and Financial  
for Maine REALTOR Magazine

If the past 20 months or so have taught us anything, it is that the one thing we can count on is the fact that we cannot count on anything. It seems as if March 2020 marks a demarcation line,

the BCE and CE of our millennia.

Many whose fortunes are tied to the real estate market have done exceedingly well. An equal number of business owners continue to struggle to find employees and products needed to do their work. One family after another has recognized the virtues of life in Maine and, often supported by the realized promise of remote work, have moved to Maine to begin a new chapter of their lives.

The result is an increase in estate prices – up by as much as 35% in some locations – pushing the dream of home ownership out of the reach of many of our fellow Mainers. While there are many causes for economic and public health concern and anxiety, Maine seems poised for continued growth and prosperity.

Through it all, our real estate professionals continue to guide buyers and seller alike through a market that is unlike any other. No two buyer or seller situations are the same and the role that the professional real estate agent plays has never been more important. Knowing that your role extends well beyond the actual real estate transaction, the following represents my top three considerations impacting the insurance industry as we venture toward the early months of 2022.

**FEMA Flood Risk Rating 2.0:** Remember way back when flood insurance was rated by those confusing combinations of letters that seemed like they were an acronym but really were not? VE, AE, A1, B, C, and X have all been done away with, at least as they relate to the pricing of flood insurance. These designations still apply to construction ordinance and insurance requirements for mortgages, but they are no longer used in the rating of flood insurance. Enter Risk Rating 2.0, where FEMA will no longer use flood zones to calculate flood insurance rates. Instead, an individual property's risk will be used: Foundation type, elevation, structure replacement cost, the

frequency of a variety of flood types, and the distance to water, among others. In a stark departure from the past, FEMA has decided to apply actuarial data, common sense and modern technology to the rating of flood insurance.

While major changes are rarely good for everyone affected, it does appear that Maine will see one of the largest average decreases of flood insurance premiums in the country. In fact, New England homeowners, in general, will make out the best with RISK rating 2.0, while Florida, Louisiana, New Jersey, and North Carolina will see the largest increases. Another benefit is that insurance agents will have a much easier time of quoting flood insurance so be sure to reach out to an independent agent to get a quote for sellers and buyers alike.

**Increased Cost of Construction:** Inflation has crept into just about every sector of the economy, but it seems like no sector has been impacted more dramatically than the construction industry. Unprecedented demand, material shortages and thin labor pools have all driven the cost to build, repair or remodel far higher, assuming you can even find a contractor to do the work. Property insurance is squarely impacted by construction costs. Insurance agents use a variety of software products to estimate the replacement cost of a home, or the cost to rebuild the entire structure, including costs associated with demolition and debris removal. In many instances, these estimating tools have not kept up with the cost increases on the ground, leaving property owners at the risk of being under-insured. In addition to working with replacement cost values that accurately reflect today's costs, homeowners should look for a homeowners insurance policy where the cost to rebuild is not directly capped by the limit of coverage. Extended replacement cost policies will provide up to 25% to 100% more than the limit of dwelling coverage, while guaranteed replacement costs policies have no cap.



**Climate Change and Severe Weather:** Some days it seems as if every single news cycle includes stories about a new catastrophic weather event. Wildfires, hurricanes, tornados, droughts and unprecedented rainstorms are impacting every part of our country. It may feel as if Maine is insulated from the worst of these increasingly severe events, but many indicators show Maine climate change as among the fastest in the country and with that change, we can expect more and more severe weather events. Understandably, insurance accessibility and affordability are directly impacted by the billions of dollars paid out to rebuild following these storms. For now, Maine continues to be looked upon favorably by insurance underwriters but in certain parts of the country, access to affordable insurance is having a dramatic impact on the real estate market. Insurance costs are going up in Maine, as well, as insurers look to squeeze more premium out of states that perform well as a strategy to make up for losses in other regions. Reinsurance, the insurance that insurers buy to offset the risk of large losses, is also getting more expensive, further increasing costs on the retail level. Especially buyers of high value, rural or island homes should be looking to start early on the insurance shopping process, as there will be fewer options and those that exist will be more expensive than in years past.

The role of the real estate agent has never been more important. The idea that your profession might be replaced by a website's algorithm and artificial intelligence is laughable, especially when viewed in the light of today's market. Your ability to guide a buyer and seller through the emotional ups and downs of the transaction is just as important as your ability to anticipate challenges and recommend professional resources and advisors who add value to your relationship. Make sure that insurance considerations are on your list and that you approach your deals this year and into the next.

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# **Sarah Ruef-Lindquist Discusses 'Pandemics and Planned Giving'**

Pandemics and Planned Giving was the topic of a presentation made by Sarah Ruef-Lindquist, JD, CTFA at the Northern New England chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals annual conference, held Nov. 3 and Nov. 4.

Ruef-Lindquist, a financial advisor at Allen Insurance and Financial in Camden, said the COVID-19 pandemic drove people to focus on estate planning, while the confluence of historic stock and real estate values, potential estate and income tax changes and compelling societal need has laid the groundwork for many fruitful conversations with organizations' most loyal supporters.

Ruef-Lindquist explored these dynamics, which she said could impact gift planning for years to come. Attendees at the conference, held in Manchester, N.H., included approximately 150 fundraising and non-profit professionals from across Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont.

Ruef-Lindquist has had a role in planned giving as an attorney, former trust officer and philanthropic advisor and consultant to non-profits across New England. She is outgoing president of the Maine Planned Giving Council and she previously served as vice president for Southern Maine at the Maine Community Foundation and CEO of the Maine Women's Fund.

*The Certified Trust and Financial Advisor (CTFA) designation awarded by the Institute of Certified Bankers, American Bankers*

# The Value of Check Lists

By Chris Richmond

Originally Submitted to [WorkBoat Magazine](#)

At today's shipyards there can be a variety of daily tasks, all running the gamut across industrial and marine. Staying on top of safety is a full-time job and details are critical. You can micro-manage efficiently with simple check lists. Here are a few examples from a local yard we work with:

## **On the marine side**

**Station bills:** Are they relevant? If not, rewrite them.

**Wheelhouse:** All house lights, spotlights, running lights and deck lights; no hitches in the steering function or throttle function; fuel; check all instruments.

**Engine room:** All safety equipment, including safety glasses, hard hats, safety gloves, hearing protection, non-slippery decking, flashlights, fire extinguishers. Check all fluid levels and heat and shaft shielding.

**Charts:** Are they up to date? We all get lazy sometimes and rely too much on electronics to the point where we can't even find our charts. Channel markers are often updated and moved. Your GPS may need updating as well as your charts.

## **On the dry side**

**Company vehicles:** Tire pressure and wear, engine oil, lights and gauges. A complete safety check and a place to note unusual items including whether anything is broken or protruding.

**Fork trucks:** Hydraulic fluid and all other fluids. Check the load lock (twice). Battery and safety equipment including fire extinguishers, also driver certification.

**User manuals:** Are they handy and can you quickly refer to them in case you need to troubleshoot a problem with your electronics? Most user manuals have a toll-free number to call in case you need expert help to figure something out. You may need to make one of those calls when you're out to sea and have nobody else to help you.

**Paint rooms:** All ventilation working; filters clean; respirator filters clean; all painters beard free and able to use coveralls, etc.; fire suppression systems checked.

**Welding shop:** All safety equipment, including helmets, gloves, eyewash station, welding curtains, all gas bottles chained in and welder leathers available to all.

Nothing is too obvious or basic to appear on a check list. Having checklists and using them effectively are two separate things. Keep track of how your employees are using them to stay on top of both safety as well as maintenance. This can help keep your equipment in good shape as well as keeping your claims down.

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# When Six Inches of Rain Falls Overnight ...

We hope you are safe and sound after this weekend's rain storm. We're here to help, with answers to questions about flood insurance – and to talk with you about additions to your existing homeowners insurance coverage for things like sewer backup. Remember, you don't have to live in an official flood zone to purchase [flood insurance](#) – it's available to anyone and is more affordable than you think. No matter what your insurance question, you can always Ask Allen.