

How a Biden Administration Might Impact HR and the Workplace

While we don't have a Magic 8 ball, with a new Executive Administration, all signs point to changes to how you approach your human resources. Our seasoned prognosticators have some insight for you.

Each presidential transition brings changes to the HR landscape. And the more prepared an HR team is, the easier it will be for them to succeed amid these changes. To that end, this article discusses potential changes employers can expect during a Biden presidency.

To read more, click the image at right to view the article (PDF) in a new window.

One Way to Make the Most of your Homeowners Insurance

Homeowners insurance helps you protect the things that mean so much to you. To be certain that your valued possessions are fully covered against fire, theft and other perils, you should take some extra steps.

Many smart homeowners install security devices, including deadbolt locks, fire extinguishers and burglar alarm systems.

These precautions reduce the chance and severity of a loss. However, there is no guarantee. There is another important step to take – one that is often overlooked.

Create an inventory of the things in your home.

This detailed record of your home furnishings, personal possessions and valuable items, in writing and in pictures, is an important complement to your homeowners insurance.

Having this information will make it easier for you to file a complete and prompt claim, supported by accurate documentation. This will help determine the replacement cost of your lost or damaged possession so your claim can be settled more quickly.

We truly hope you never need to access your home inventory. But if you do need it, the investment of time to complete the inventory will have been well worth it.

Contact your Allen Insurance personal insurance account executive for more information. We can provide you with an inventory to complete, guidelines for the kinds of photos to take and a place to store it all.

Do You Use 123456 as Your Password?

QUESTION: What were the top passwords leaked during 2020 data breaches?

We recently came across a new report looking at 275,699,516 passwords leaked during 2020 data breaches – it found that the

most common passwords are incredibly easy to guess – and it could take less than a second or two for attackers to break into accounts using these credentials. Only 44% of those recorded were considered “unique.”

If your cyber defenses have failed – or you have been breached by a hacker – cyber insurance can help you recover. Ask a member of the Allen Insurance and Financial business insurance team for more information about cyber coverage. Anyone who does business on the Internet really shouldn't be without it.

ANSWER: The most popular passwords from those 2020 data breaches included “123456,” “123456789,” “password,” and “12345678.” [Read more about the report.](#)

The Catch-Up Payment Provision for Overtime Exempt Employees



The Department of Labor final overtime rule became effective Jan. 1, 2020. Among other things, the final rule also allows employers to use nondiscretionary bonuses and incentive payments (including commissions) to satisfy up to 10% of the salary level if these payments are made at least on an annual basis. To enable compliance with the nondiscretionary bonus option, the final rule allows employers to make a “catch-up” payment at the end of each 52-week period. [Read more now.](#)

Getting Back to Work After COVID-19

By Chris Richmond

Originally submitted to [WorkBoat Magazine](#) / November 2020



When the pandemic hit, you were probably looking for ways to save money as the economy ground to a halt. Changes in your insurance policy can reflect a lower premium, but can also affect your coverage. As you start to get back in to business, take a look at any changes you may have made to your insurance policy and see if you need to undo them.

As the pandemic hit, some of the first calls I received from clients were requests to remove navigation from their commercial vessels. Their business slowed down and there was no work for the boats, so this was an obvious way to see some immediate relief in their insurance premium. As the economy starts back up again and you see demand and work for your vessels, make sure to have lay up removed from your policy. While the boat is insured at the dock, during lay up the moment you drop the lines coverage ceases unless you have added navigation back to the policy.

Business owners also sought savings on their insurance bill by reducing the annual projected payroll for their workers compensation or USL&H. As renewals came along during the economic downturn, business reduced their workforce and renewals in WC and USL&H reflected this. As business picks up again and workers who had been laid off are brought back, your annual projected payroll will increase. You can wait until the audit at the end of the policy term and get hit with a large additional premium or you can contact your agent and report the increase in payroll. This will result in spreading out the increase in premium over the remaining term of your policy.

Finally, if you have been shut down for a period of time and equipment has been idle, be sure to do your due diligence and make sure all works as it should. Routine maintenance may have been missed or deferred. Inspection dates could have been missed for safety equipment or log books could be out of date for safety review. Take the time to clean up these area before a fine comes your way.

Starting business back up means getting both customers and your employees back in the door – but don't forget to contact your insurance agent as well. He or she should always be happy to hear from you and help keep your policy up to date.

Pollution Liability: More Than Just the Clean Up

By Chris Richmond

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Most commercial hull policies have a pollution exclusion clause attached. You can often get a buy back endorsement added but the coverages on this vary from company to company and often the clause will not cover what you really need to. What you really need is a stand-alone pollution policy.

A pollution policy not only covers spills related to the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 but also claims brought under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA). Remember, pollution is not only petroleum spills; they can also be spills or discharge of other hazardous materials stored or transported on your vessel. You can have just as much problem with a chemical spill as an oil spill.

And don't think that that barge you tow (the one without an engine or bunker fuel) is safe from pollution claims. What if you have a fuel storage container on deck that somehow ends up overboard? You now have a pollution claim. Should your tow come off and the barge has a collision or allusion – causing a fuel spill – you now have a pollution claim.

After the spill is contained and cleaned up, who is going to pay for your defense costs? As you are well aware, this is a part of liability policies and are key as potential litigation claims can drag on and defense costs mount. Whether or not you are found liable, your defense costs can add up quickly. Having these covered by your insurance policy is very important.

And what if your spill was a total accident? Will that stop any

finances or penalties imposed upon you but state or federal authorities? Don't count on it. A pollution policy can provide coverage for fines which may be imposed.

The only thing worse than the actual spill is the image on television or social media of oil-coated birds on the beach. Allowing the public to know that you are doing your best to take care of the situation can go a long way.

While you may never have to use your pollution policy, the coverage it provides for that one time will pay off in the long run. A stand-alone pollution policy is an important part of your vessel's coverage and in some instances is required by the Coast Guard's Certificate of Financial Reasonability (COFR) program. Have a talk with your insurance agent to find out more.

OSHA Clarifies COVID-19 Reporting Requirements

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has published two additional answers to its list of [COVID-19 frequently asked questions \(FAQs\)](#). The new answers clarify when employers must report COVID-19 in-patient hospitalizations and fatalities. [OSHA Clarifies COVID-19 Reporting Requirements](#)

The Value Checklists for Homeowners & Home Buyers

By Cale Pickford

This article appears in the Fall 2020 edition of Maine Realtor Magazine.



Cale Pickford

Even the most optimistic among us probably would not have forecast the current boom in residential real estate sales. A common refrain over these last months is that there is no better place to weather a global pandemic than Maine. People all over the country agree and more and more families are making the move and calling Maine home. With multiple offers, COVID-19 protocols, virtual showings and listing inventory at an all-time low, real estate agents have never been busier. Such a frantic pace makes it easy to forget important steps of due diligence and best practices. Checklists are an important tool to keep the agent organized and assist in reducing liability and provide better customer service.

There are numerous real estate agent checklists available online and in circulation at agencies. Keep in mind when using a checklist, that no detail is too small when it comes to due diligence. Working proactively will not only protect you from liability it will save you a lot time in the long run – a

valuable asset in a hot real estate market. Of course, insurance should be on every real estate agent's checklist and the following can serve as a list within your list:

Location

The old adage that the three most important things in real estate are location, location and location is just as true for insurance underwriting. Many standard national insurance companies and direct writers do a great job insuring suburban homes but often cannot cover isolated, rural and coastal (in particular island) locations. If you are involved with a sale of a property with one or more of these attributes, makes sure the buyer is working early to secure homeowners insurance.

Flood Plain Concerns

It's logical to pair flood plain concerns with location, because flood plain issues can crop up with any property, not just waterfront homes. If you think there's even a remote chance that a home could be impacted by the special hazard flood plain, you should pull the flood insurance rate maps or work with an insurance agent to provide a flood zone determination. The sooner flood plain concerns can be addressed, the more likely you'll have a favorable outcome.

Occupancy

Many people have decided to move to Maine full time but we're still a state with one of the highest ratio of secondary homes to primary in the country. Secondary homes are always more complicated to insure than primary homes. In addition to having fewer insurers to choose from, owners of secondary homes may be required to install central fire, burglar and low temperature alarms, hire a caretaker, make sure the home is accessible year around, and winterize the plumbing.

Business Pursuits

With more and more people working and learning from home, the lines between personal and business has been completely blurred, and in many cases, almost to invisible. Homeowners should review their plans to use their home for business with the insurer. Another timely consideration is home-schooling pods, a unique 2020 concern which should also be reviewed with an insurance agent for coverage considerations. Home-based businesses such as woodworking, bakeries, boat building, and any situations where clients regularly visit the home, can often disqualify one from a homeowner's policy all together.

Renovations

It makes perfect sense to renovate a home immediately after purchase – just make sure that the buyer communicates their plans with their insurer. Especially with such limited inventory, buyers cannot afford to be picky so there's a strong likelihood someone will want to modify the home to suit their tastes and need. Depending on the extent of the renovation, a buyer might not even be eligible for a homeowner's policy. In an instance such as this, the buyer might need to secure a builders risk or course of construction policy which greatly limits coverage and often costs far more than the equivalent homeowners' policy.

Vacation Rental

The pandemic has only accelerated the trend toward more and more families eschewing traditional hotels and inns for private vacation rental homes. To meet the demand, more and more homeowners are opening up their second and, in many cases, primary homes, to these weekly tenants. Using one's home this way can have significant implications on insurance.

It would be nice if only one of these items on the list would

occur per closing, but it is often the case these issues come in twos or threes compounding the problem. Lists allow the real estate agent to keep on track and get ahead of issues before they threaten to derail the deal. Smooth deals mean happy clients which leads to more referrals.

On-Demand Webcast: Winds of Change: How Offshore Wind Farms Will Change the Landscape of Maritime Workers' Compensation

Wind energy is poised to eventually be the dominant source of power in the United States.



As companies ramp up their workforce to support activities related to wind farm construction and maintenance, it's critical to understand the various workers' compensation laws that impact this sector. In this webcast, our [Dan Bookham](#) joins colleagues from American Equity Underwriters to discuss:

- The various workers' compensation laws that impact the wind energy sector

- Jurisdiction issues unique to offshore wind farms
- Old laws that will be interpreted to meet new circumstances

View the webcast: <https://loom.ly/bbj7q4w>

Checklist: Winter Storage for Boats

Source: PatriotInsuranceco.com

Sadly, boating season will come to an end soon, and Old Man Winter will be paving the way for snowmobiles. Winter storage for boats takes some careful planning. If you follow a checklist, winterizing your boat can be easy, ensuring your boat will be in great shape come spring.



For safe winter storage for your boat, follow our checklist:

Inspect for damage.

- Thoroughly inspect the boat for any damage. Repair now, if possible.
- Check electrical systems and appliances to make sure they are functioning properly (make repairs before storing the boat, if possible).
- Check the battery to make sure it is fully charged before

storing.

Prep the fuel system.

- Fill the fuel tank but leave enough room for expansion.
- Treat the fuel with a stabilizer, then run the engine for 10 minutes to get it circulating throughout the engine.
- Seal the fuel valves.

Winterize the engine.

- Change the oil and replace filters.
- Flush the engine with fresh water, then let it drain.
- Wash the engine with soap and water. Rinse thoroughly.
- Fog the engine cylinders with an aerosol fogging solution.
- Lubricate the engine's grease fittings.

Flush the cooling system.

- Drain any remaining coolant.
- Run a less toxic propylene glycol antifreeze through the system.

Clean inside and out.

- Clean the boat inside and out, removing any plant life or barnacles.
- Remove any valuables from inside the boat.
- Take out any food or drinks.
- Bring home any cushions and store them in a cool, dry place.

Store your boat.

- Remove the battery and store it in a safe, dry spot.
- Consider purchasing a dehumidifier for the storage area to help prevent mildew.
- Lock your boat (and leave a key with the marina manager,

if applicable).

- Cover and store your boat.
- Check your boat periodically or have the marina check it and report to you.

Then, when spring comes around, make sure you have the right protection for your boat. Talk to an Allen Insurance representative about boat insurance.