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.

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 **i**t 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 your approach your deals this year and into the next.

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 approximately150 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 Association.

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.

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.

What You Should Know About Hull Perils

By Chris Richmond
Originally Submitted to WorkBoat Magazine

Chris Richmond

A commercial hull policy can sometimes resemble an action-packed maritime novel: Covered perils of the sea can include men of war, pirates, letters off mart and detainments of all kings are just some of the terms you might read there. But what about when you just have a problem with your engine? This may or may not be covered.

A hull policy is a named peril policy, meaning unless something is a stated peril– written right there in the policy – it is not covered. That said, a hull policy still provides rather broad coverage. There are always exclusions; for instance, wear and tear is not a covered cause of loss. But you should know about two coverages found in a hull policy: Latent Defect and Negligence of Repairers.

Latent Defect is defined as a flaw in material existing at the time of the building of the vessel or machinery not discoverable by ordinary methods of testing. While the expense of replacing the broken part is excluded, the ensuing damage can be covered.

Negligence of Repairers is another peril which can provide important coverage. Should you have a repair to your vessel's engine – and it fails – then you may have coverage. Case in point: An insured had a high-pressure fuel line fail repeatedly on his engine. An investigation determined that during a previous repair job, the repairer had not installed the proper number of clamps as stated by the manufacturer. This produced excessive vibration and eventually stress fractures. The client was relieved two-fold. First that he had found out why he was repeatedly blowing fuel lines, and also that he now had a covered cause of loss. Aside from the repair being covered, he could also claim loss of use from the cancelled charters that he suffered.

Claims can come in all different sizes and varieties. Don't be afraid to give your agent a call to discuss what is going on with your vessel. While it may initially appear that there is no coverage, some investigation into the root of the problem can often yield positive results.

Your Guide to Year-End Financial Planning: A 10-Point

Checklist

From the hope that came with reopening to the disappointment of another COVID-19 resurgence, 2021 is panning out to be another roller-coaster year. With the fourth quarter upon us, one routine remains consistent: it's time to start organizing your finances for the new year. New rules related to the pandemic, coupled with tax and retirement changes that carried over from last year, means there's a lot to consider. This checklist highlights some key points to help guide you as you get started.

1) Boost Your Retirement Contributions
Workplace accounts. Are you maximizing contributions to your workplace plan? If not, now's the time to think about increasing your contribution to take full advantage of any employer match benefit. For 2021, the maximum employee deferral for 401(k), 403(b), and 457 accounts is $19,500, and individuals ages 50 and older can defer an additional catch-up of $6,500. For SIMPLE IRAs, the deferral remains $13,500 and the catch-up is $3,000.

Traditional IRA. Maxing out your contributions to a traditional IRA is another option. The SECURE Act repealed the maximum age for contributions, so individuals ages 70 and a half and older who earned income in 2021 can contribute to a traditional IRA. Modified adjusted gross income (MAGI) limits for contributions to traditional and Roth IRAs increased in 2021, so be sure to review MAGI eligibility thresholds. The maximum contribution amount to a traditional or Roth IRA remains $6,000 with a $1,000 catch-up for clients ages 50 and older.

2) Use FSA Dollars and Make HSA Contributions

Note that in 2020, the IRS relaxed certain use-or-lose restrictions for Flexible Spending Accounts (FSAs) that remain in effect this year. Employers can extend the grace period for unused FSAs up to 12 months in 2021. In addition, if you have a dependent care FSA, you can save as much as $10,500 in 2021

If you have a high deductible health plan (HDHP), now is a good time to explore maximizing your Health Savings Account (HSA) contributions. In 2021, the maximum contribution for an individual HSA is $3,600, and the maximum for a family HDHP is $7,200. If you're age 50 or older you can contribute an additional $1,000. We're happy to discuss prorated contributions with you if you had an HDHP for part of 2021.

3) Manage Your Marginal and Capital Gains Tax Matters

If you're on the threshold of a tax bracket, you may be able to put yourself in the lower one by deferring some income to 2022. Here are a few thresholds to keep in mind:

- **37 percent marginal tax rate:** Taxable incomes exceeding $523,600 (individual), $628,300 (married filing jointly), $523,600 (head of household), and $314,150 (married filing separately)
- **20 percent capital gains tax rate:** Taxable incomes exceeding $445,851 (individual), $501,601 (married filing jointly), $473,751 (head of household), and $250,801 (married filing separately)
- **8 percent surtax on investment income:** The lesser of net investment income or the excess of MAGI greater than $200,000 (individual), $250,000 (married filing jointly), $200,000 (head of household), and $125,000 (married filing separately)
- **9 percent additional Medicare tax:** W-2 earnings and self-employment income above the same MAGI thresholds as the investment income surtax (For clients with W-2 earnings above the MAGI thresholds, total Medicare taxes will be 2.35 percent; for self-employed clients, total Medicare

taxes will be 3.8 percent.)

4) Pay Attention to American Rescue Plan (ARP) Details
This statute, signed into law by President Biden in March 2021, changed the Child Care Tax Credit and the Child and Dependent Care Credit (for 2021 only). It also changed the taxation of unemployment compensation and canceled student debt.

- **Child Tax Credit:** In July 2021, the IRS began issuing 50 percent of this credit in six monthly advanced payments. Payments are based on 2020 income, so if your income increased in 2021, keep in mind you may need to reconcile the advanced payments. Be sure to review your eligibility for the credit.
- **Child and Dependent Care Credit:** In 2021, the credit is fully refundable. If your family earns less than $125,000 annually, you may claim a 50 percent refundable credit on care expenses of $8,000 for one child or dependent or expenses of $16,000 for two or more children or dependents.
- **Unemployment compensation:** In 2020, $10,500 of unemployment benefits were exempt from income tax. This exemption does not apply in 2021, so if you received benefits but didn't have taxes withheld, it's possible you may owe taxes.
- **Canceled student debt:** Under the ARP, you won't owe taxes on student loans that are canceled or forgiven between 2021 and 2025. This relief applies to both federal and private loans.

5) Rebalance Your Portfolio
Reviewing your capital gains and losses may reveal tax planning opportunities, such as harvesting losses to offset capital gains.

6) Make Your Charitable Giving Payoff

The CARES Act above-the-line deduction was extended to 2021, meaning you can deduct up to $300 per person ($600 if you file jointly) for cash charitable contributions. If you itemize, the deduction of up to 100 percent for all cash charitable contributions is available in 2021. (**Please note:** This deduction doesn't apply to cash contributions made to donor-advised funds or private, nonoperating foundations)

Qualified charitable distribution (QCD) rules haven't changed, so if you're older than 70 and a half, you can make a QCD of up to $100,000 directly to a charity; if you're married and filing jointly, you may exclude up to $100,000 donated from each of your and your spouse's IRA.

7) Form a Plan for Stock Options

If you hold stock options, it's a good idea to develop a strategy for managing your current and future income. As part of this, be sure to have your tax advisor prepare an alternative minimum tax (ATM) projection. Keep in mind, ATM exemption limits increased in 2021 to $73,600 for single tax filers and $114,600 for married joint filers. If you're thinking about exercising incentive stock options, you may want to wait until January 2022 if, depending on your ATM projections, there's any tax benefit to waiting.

8) Prepare for Estimated Taxes and RMDs

- Under the SECURE Act, if you reached age 70 and a half after January 1, 2020, you can wait until you turn 72 to start taking RMDs. RMDs are required in 2021.
- If you took coronavirus-related distributions (CRDs) from your retirement plan, we can review the repayment option you chose in 2020. Remember, the choice not to repay all of a CRD in 2020 is irrevocable.
- If you took a 401(k) loan after March 27, 2020, you'll

also need to establish a repayment plan and confirm the amount of accrued interest.

9) Adjust Withholding and Prepare for Student Loan Repayment
If you think you may be subject to an estimated tax penalty, consider asking your employers (via Form W-4) to adjust your withholding to cover shortfalls. The IRS tax withholding calculator can help you with your estimates.

Student loan payments, which the CARES Act paused in March 2020, are scheduled to resume in February 2022. If you reduced other debt during this period, you'll need to adjust your monthly cash flow to include upcoming student loan payments.

10) Assess Your Estate Plans
Year-end is always a good time to review and update your estate plan to make sure it's still in line with your goals and accounts for any change in circumstances. Depending on your net worth, establishing a defective grantor trust, spousal lifetime access trust, or irrevocable life insurance trust may be an effective strategy to reduce your estate tax exposure. In addition, take the time to update your beneficiary designations and review trustee appointments, power of attorney provisions, and health care directives.

Rely on Us as a Resource
It's not too early to get a jump on planning—and even though your situation is unique to you, this high-level checklist can be a great starting point. Please feel free to contact us to talk through the issues and deadlines that affect you. We're also happy to collaborate with your CPA, attorney, and other professionals you work with to help ensure you're prepared for the coming year.

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. Third party links are provided to you as a courtesy and are for informational purposes only. We make no representation as to the completeness or accuracy of information provided at these websites.*

Understanding an HRA

A health reimbursement arrangement (HRA) is an employer-funded account that is designed to reimburse employees for qualified medical expenses that are paid for out-of-pocket. Additional information is on this "Knox Your Benefits" PDF.

The Top 6 Things to Know About Workers Compensation Insurance

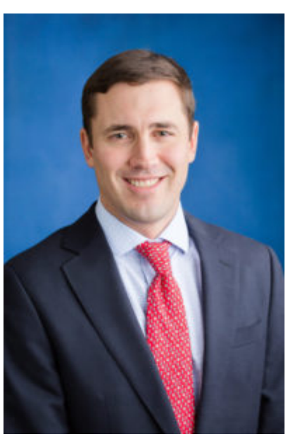
By Karen Reed and
Krissy Campbell

1. Workers' compensation insurance covers your employees' medical expenses if they are injured on the job.
2. Workers' compensation can reimburse the employee for their lost wages.
3. Workers' compensation can provide disability benefits.

4. Maine law requires you to carry it.
5. Workers’ compensation can provide death benefits.
6. And the most important thing about workers compensation coverage? Having a knowledgeable local agent who can help you with managing the costs and your exposures.

When you have questions, Ask Allen. We’re here to help.

Commercial and Mixed-Use Real Estate How to balance property owner’s dreams with insurance reality



Cale Pickford

By C ale Pickford
Originally submitted to Maine REALTOR Magazine

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have been far-reaching in all industries, but it seems clear that 2020 and 2021 have fundamentally changed the way business is conducted and, in turn, left an indelible mark on the commercial real estate market.

Demand for warehouses and distribution centers for e-commerce, self-storage facilities, affordable housing and certain retail spaces for grocery and pharmacy businesses is at an all-time high, while occupancy rates for hotels, retail, restaurant and traditional metro downtown office space have weakened significantly.Many of these struggling sectors were buoyed by federal stimulus money, and many of the changes to the way people work will remain for the foreseeable future. The impact of this is being felt right here in the Pine Tree State.

Through both economic studies and anecdotal evidence, we know that Maine is getting a massive influx of new residents. Many are bringing their jobs with them and working remotely for employers elsewhere, while many others will be looking to start new small businesses in our state. Maine welcomes these entrepreneurs – but it is important that dreams intersect with reality before the purchase to bring about an understanding about how insurers look at mixed-use real estate. This knowledge can help you guide your clients in making a decision that will set them up for long-term success.

We can all agree that remote working is here to stay. While there is no question that many employees and business still find value in shared office space which facilitates professional and social interaction, it is clear that the idea that one has to be in a traditional office in order to be productive has been entirely debunked. As a client who recently moved from Massachusetts to Midcoast Maine told me, he could do his job from the moon if there was an Internet connection there.

For the most part, employees of larger companies who work from home do not have any unique insurance needs and a standard homeowner’s policy will accommodate their professional use of the home. However, it seems like an equal number of people are bringing their professional expertise to Maine and are looking to work as freelancers or consultants.

Depending on the business sector, these independent professionals need to insure their business in many of the same ways that larger companies do. As with remote employees, so long as they do not have client traffic or employees in their home, they often can rely on a traditional homeowner’s policy to insure their home, though it is important to note that that policy will still exclude any business property or liability exposure. In order to close that gap, these independent professionals will need to secure a commercial insurance package policy, which provides general liability, business personal property (think of that expensive laptop and Zoom lighting set up) and most importantly, professional or errors and omissions liability insurance. Knowing the costs of this insurance program up front is an important component of a sound business plan.

How about those occupations where business cannot be conducted via phone, email and Zoom? Maine has produced and attracted artisans and craftspeople for generations and many of these creative and skilled people take advantage of the low cost, short-commute synergy that home-based businesses provide.

As with work-from-home professionals, the unmodified homeowner’s policy excludes coverage for business activities and property. However, unlike use of a room at home for the new traditional office space, many other business activities will disqualify one from homeowner’s coverage altogether. In instances such as these, usually the home or outbuilding where business is conducted (i.e. where the product is made) will need to be insured on a commercial policy and then the owner needs to be insured as a tenant of the commercial building.

This kind of hybrid solution picks up the personal property and liability protection which is excluded on the commercial insurance policy. Examples of businesses which might compromise eligibility for homeowners programs would be woodworking, boat building, commercial food products manufacturing, ceramics manufacturing with kilns, farming, and many others.

Historians and economists suggest that the pandemic-inspired paradigm shift will propel Maine to a transformational chapter characterized by sharp gains in property values, a younger and growing population and economic growth. No doubt this current trend will continue, with many individuals and families making the leap of faith to move to Maine and following their dream. As a central advisor in that transition, make sure these dreamers and doers are considering all of the practical challenges that their move entails. And as always, a critical component of that advice is for your buyer to call a local independent insurance agent who understands your client’s dreams and can suggest insurance and risk management solutions that will protect their future.