

A NORTHERN MICHIGAN FAMILY GUIDE

5

COSTLY INSURANCE MISTAKES FAMILIES MAKE

*And how to protect what you've
spent a lifetime building.*



MICHIGAN INSURANCE SERVICES

Marcus Wegmeyer · Protecting Up North families for 40+ years

Prologue: The Call That Changed Everything

Nothing in my early training could have prepared me for the phone call that changed how I think about insurance forever.

I had been in the insurance business for less than six months when a young widow called to tell me that her husband had been in a car accident — and didn't survive. That one call started two claims: one to repair her car, and one for the life insurance her husband had wisely purchased.

He had been a smart and caring man. When he first bought the life insurance policy, his wife pushed back. Money was tight — they had a mobile home payment, a car payment, two young children, and very little room in the budget for another monthly bill.

As you can imagine, the weeks after the accident were filled with shock, grief, and confusion. Family and friends showed up with food and flowers. Life felt frozen.

And then there were the children — too young to fully understand, but old enough to feel the weight of it all.

As their agent, I did everything I could to make the claims process easier. The paperwork was the simple part. The hard part came next: delivering the check.

I called the widow and drove to her home. We sat at the kitchen table with coffee between us. Before we touched any paperwork, she shared something honest and personal. She said that she had originally been against the life insurance. They couldn't afford it, she had argued — but her husband had insisted.

Then she said something I've never forgotten:

"Insurance is something you pay for but hope you never have to use."

The casseroles and cakes had stopped coming. She was now facing a hard reality — feeding, clothing, and caring for two children on her own. The life insurance payout, while not huge, was exactly what she needed. It would give her a year to adjust, focus on her kids, and find a new normal without the pressure of going back to work right away.

She looked me in the eye and said:

"This check came at exactly the right time — cash when I needed it most."

Then she said something unexpected: she asked me to help her apply for a new life insurance policy — this time on her own life. She now understood its value.

Lessons That Shaped My Career

- Insurance is something you pay for but hope you never have to use.
- Insurance payments arrive exactly when they are needed most.
- These truths apply to every type of insurance — home, auto, life, and more.

Three Years Later

Three years later, the widow remarried. Before the ink was dry on the marriage certificate, she and her new husband came to my office to apply for coverage on his life too. Eventually, they moved away and I lost track of them.

But if I could find her today, I would thank her. She didn't just teach me about insurance. She taught me about trust, responsibility, and the real purpose behind what we do — protecting families when they need it most.

That belief, born at that kitchen table, has guided every conversation, every policy, and every relationship I've built since — including the work that led to this book.

Introduction: Why I Wrote This Book

Let me be clear: this isn't a textbook and I'm not trying to make you an insurance expert. You've got better things to do. What I am aiming for is something much more practical — clarity, confidence, and control when it comes to protecting what you've built.

Over the years, I've seen far too many smart, hard-working families blindsided by coverage gaps — most of which could have been avoided with just a little guidance. That's what this book is for.

Here's What You'll Get

- Practical Education: Learn what actually matters in insurance — how it works, what it covers, and how to think about cost without focusing on the wrong things.
- Confidence: When you're done, you'll be ready to make better decisions — without second-guessing or drowning in complicated language.

What Clients Are Saying

"We truly appreciate the service we receive. No matter how simple the question, they take the time to explain so we understand. That matters a lot." — JAK

"Great customer service. The staff is knowledgeable and teaches us about the best options available." — Keith W.

"We love that you treat us like valued customers and always help us find the best options. The personal service makes all the difference." — M.D.

A Bit About Me

After more than 40 years in the insurance world, I've learned what truly matters: coverage that works when life doesn't go as planned. I've earned a few awards and built a business I'm proud of — but what matters most to me is helping families sleep better at night.

Outside the office, I fly planes, pull weeds, and travel with my wife of 50+ years. I believe in careful planning, straight answers, and long-term relationships. That's the spirit behind this book — and the way I do business every day.

Table of Contents

Prologue

"The Call That Changed Everything" — A true story from early in my career that revealed what insurance is really about.

Introduction

Why This Book Exists and Who It's For — This isn't about selling you a policy. It's about protecting the life you've built.

Chapter 1: Misunderstanding Risk

What You Don't Know Can Hurt You — Why risk isn't just about the chance something happens — it's about what it costs when it does.

Chapter 2: Believing Price is the Problem

Why "Cheaper" Can Cost You More — How focusing on price leads to gaps in coverage — and how smart buyers make better choices.

Chapter 3: Ignoring Business & Side Hustle Risks

When Your Passion Project Puts Your Family's Finances at Risk — From side jobs to short-term rentals, we uncover the risks that personal policies don't cover.

Chapter 4: Leaving Recreational Vehicles Unprotected

Protecting Your Passions: RVs, ATVs, Motorcycles & More — These "toys" often fall through the cracks of standard coverage.

Chapter 5: Forgetting to Review Your Coverage

Life Changes — Your Coverage Should Too — A policy isn't a one-time decision. Your life grows and changes, and your coverage needs to keep up.

Chapter 6: The Real Secret — Building a Trusted Relationship

Why Trust Goes Both Ways — What it really means to have a trusted advisor in your corner.

Chapter 1: Misunderstanding Risk

What You Don't Know Can Hurt You

Understanding insurance starts with one simple idea: when something bad happens to a few people, the cost is shared by everyone in the group. At first, this might seem complicated — but for families with a lot to protect, understanding how insurance works is critical. Let's break it down with a real example.

The 2022 Gaylord Tornado

In May 2022, a tornado hit Gaylord, Michigan, and caused massive damage in minutes. Hundreds of homes and businesses were hit, leaving many people facing enormous repair bills. Some people had good coverage and their repairs were handled. Others didn't — and they had to pay some or everything themselves. That financial hit changed their lives.

This is exactly how insurance works: the losses of a few are shared among everyone who pays in. But what does that mean for your family?

Why Families with More Assets Need to Pay Attention

Families with more property — nice homes, recreational vehicles, valuable belongings, investment accounts — have more to lose. After a major event, imagine finding out your policy doesn't fully cover the cost to rebuild your custom home, replace your valuables, or pay for a lawsuit.

Many people with a lot of assets make the mistake of thinking their basic policies are "good enough." But the more you own, the more your coverage needs to match what you actually have.

How Sharing Risk Works

The heart of insurance is this: you shift the cost of a big potential loss from your own pocket to your insurance company's. Here's a simple example:

Say your home is worth \$750,000. If it burned down and you had no insurance, you'd need to come up with \$750,000 on your own. By paying a smaller amount every year — your insurance payment — you transfer that risk to your insurer. If disaster strikes, they cover the rebuild cost.

In other words, by sharing the potential cost with a large group of policyholders, you're never facing a catastrophic loss alone.

Why a Full Review of Your Risks Matters

To get the right coverage, you need to honestly look at everything you own and everything that could go wrong. Do you own ATVs, motorhomes, or travel trailers? Do you have expensive jewelry, fine art, or collectibles? Do you hire anyone to work around your home? Each of these creates the possibility for a financial loss — and each one needs to be covered.

Most people don't have the background to do this review on their own. That's why so many families end up with coverage that doesn't match their real needs.

Real-Life Example

The Millers owned a beautiful lakeside home and felt confident their insurance was solid. After a major storm caused heavy damage, they were shocked to discover their policy had gaps that left them with hundreds of thousands of dollars in uncovered repairs. What they thought was solid protection turned out to be far less than they needed — causing major financial stress and setting back their retirement plans.

Quick Tip: Assess Your Real Risks

- **Review Your Policies Annually:** Update your coverage after big changes — home improvements, major purchases, or lifestyle shifts.
- **Work With a Professional:** Find an advisor who understands your lifestyle and can spot gaps you might miss.

Many families feel frustrated by rising insurance costs and confusing policy language. That frustration is understandable. But the answer isn't to cut corners — it's to find a trusted advisor who can cut through the confusion and make sure you're truly covered.

When does your policy renew?

The window to change anything is sixty days before that date. After it posts, you live with it for another year.

You don't have to finish this book to do something about it.

Book a 30-Minute Coverage Review → [SCHEDULING LINK](#)

Or call (989) 732-7548

Chapter 2: Price vs. Protection

Why "Cheaper" Can Cost You More

As someone who enjoys Northern Michigan's lakes, golf courses, and outdoor adventures, I understand the appeal of saving money wherever you can — especially on something like insurance that you hope you never have to use. But after decades of working with families like yours, I've learned one hard lesson: **cheap coverage often means weak coverage**. And when you really need it, that weakness shows up at the worst possible time.

Real-Life Example

Dave, an avid boater from Traverse City, chose the cheapest policy for his premium fishing boat to save about \$300 a year. When his engine failed during peak boating season, his inexpensive policy didn't cover mechanical breakdowns. He paid over \$12,000 out of pocket. His short-term savings disappeared in a single event.

Cheap policies often lead to expensive disappointments. Real coverage gives you true peace of mind — especially when protecting valuable recreational assets.

The Problem with One-Size-Fits-All Policies

Many insurers push generic, standardized policies that promise simplicity and low cost. But these plans rarely account for your specific lifestyle — whether that's golfing at top-rated courses, riding ATV/UTVs or snowmobiling with friends. They often underestimate the real value of what you own.

Real-Life Example

Rick and Linda from Gaylord loved snowmobiling and owned several machines. They assumed their standard home insurance covered their snowmobiles. After an accident on a trail, they found out their policy paid out far less than the sleds were worth — leaving them with a large unexpected bill.

Generic policies often overlook valuable recreational equipment. Coverage built around your specific interests and assets makes sure everything you love is actually protected.

Why Custom Coverage Makes Sense

A policy built for your life might cost a little more upfront, but it provides for personalized coverage that fits how you actually live. Whether your passion is golf, boating, or exploring Michigan's trails, a customized policy adapts as your life and interests change.

Real-Life Example

Mike and Susan owned property near Petoskey and were passionate golfers who also enjoyed ATVs. We designed their policy to specifically protect their golf equipment, recreational vehicles, and seasonal home. When a severe storm damaged their lake cottage and golf cart, everything was covered — no hassle, no delays.

Benefits of Customized Coverage

- Directly fits your specific hobbies and assets.
- Flexible — it can grow and change as your life does.
- Protection that truly fits the Northern Michigan lifestyle.

Service Matters Too

Coverage isn't just about the numbers — it's also about the experience when something goes wrong. During stressful moments, like filing a claim after damage to your boat or property, the quality of your service makes a real difference.

Real-Life Example

Chris from Charlevoix had significant damage to his pontoon boat during a sudden summer storm. His quality provider guided him through the process quickly and arranged repairs without delay. His friend, who had a budget insurer, spent weeks dealing with slow responses and unanswered calls — missing valuable weeks of boating season.

Signs of Great Service

- Fast, clear claims handling.
- Agents who respond quickly and know your situation.
- Personalized guidance and a real relationship — not just a policy number.

How to Choose Wisely

Quick Checklist

- Does the policy fully cover your recreational vehicles and equipment?
- Are there major limitations or exclusions that could affect your lifestyle?
- Is the insurance company financially solid with a strong reputation?
- Does your agent truly understand your interests and assets?

Questions to Ask Your Agent

- Does this policy properly cover my recreational equipment?
- What are the main exclusions I should know about?
- How smooth and fast is the claims process?
- Can this coverage be updated as my life changes?

Choosing coverage based only on price can lead to big financial and emotional stress. Families like yours have invested significantly in the Northern Michigan lifestyle. Protecting that investment is essential for your long-term peace of mind. **Your lifestyle is distinctive. Your insurance should be too.**

Chapter 3: Ignoring Business & Side Hustle Risks

When Your Passion Project Puts Your Family's Finances at Risk

Personal protection coverage protects you when someone gets hurt on your property or because of something you did. It covers both legal costs and money paid in a settlement — protecting your personal savings from devastating financial losses. For families with significant assets, having the right amount of this protection is critical.

How Much Coverage Do You Need?

The right amount of protection depends on how large a potential claim or lawsuit could be. Most experts recommend a starting point of at least \$1 million in personal protection coverage. For families with more assets or a higher public profile, \$5 million or more makes sense.

Extra Coverage is More Affordable Than You Think

Boosting your protection — especially through an "umbrella" policy (which adds an extra layer of coverage on top of your existing policies) — is surprisingly affordable. For example, going from \$1 million to \$5 million in extra coverage might only cost a few hundred dollars more per year, but it offers dramatically more protection if something serious happens.

The Main Ways You Could Be Held Responsible

At Home

- Guests slipping and falling on your property.
- Accidents involving a pool, hot tub, or other hazard.
- Issues involving household workers like gardeners or housekeepers.
- Problems tied to your homeowners association rules.

Vehicles & Recreational Equipment

- Increased exposure due to Michigan's recent auto insurance law changes.
- Risks tied to luxury cars, RVs, boats, and ATVs.

Volunteer Work

- Serving on nonprofit boards.
- Coaching or supervising youth sports or community groups.

Your Children

- Claims related to actions by minor or adult children.
- Risks from social media use, online bullying, or harmful posts.

Hobbies & Recreation

- Risks from sports like golf and tennis or other leisure activities.

Often Overlooked Risks

- Side jobs and home-based businesses run from your home.
- Part-time or occasional workers you hire around the house.

Why Regular Reviews Are So Important

Your life changes — and so does your level of risk. Reviewing your personal protection coverage every year or two is strongly recommended. Working with an advisor who understands the needs of families with significant assets makes sure your coverage keeps up with your life.

Extra Coverage: A Must for Families with More to Protect

An umbrella policy gives you that important extra layer of protection. At minimum, \$1 million is essential — but families with more assets should seriously consider \$5 million or higher. A single serious accident could easily result in a multi-million-dollar court judgment. An adequately sized umbrella policy can handle that.

Don't Forget Legal Defense Costs

Legal defense costs in personal responsibility cases can run into tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars — separate from any money awarded by a court. Make sure your policy explicitly includes these defense costs.

A Common Mistake: Buying Coverage From Multiple Sources Without Coordination

Many people buy insurance for ATVs or boats directly from dealers or online, accepting whatever coverage comes with the purchase. These add-on policies often have very low limits for personal responsibility, creating serious gaps. Having all of your coverage coordinated through one trusted advisor ensures nothing slips through the cracks.

Chapter 4: Leaving Recreational Vehicles Unprotected

Protecting Your Passions: RVs, ATVs, Motorcycles & More

What do motorhomes, travel trailers, ATVs, motorcycles, and snowmobiles all have in common? They're not just toys. They're memory-making machines.

In Northern Michigan, we don't just own these machines — we live through them. From weekend trail rides near Lewiston to summer road trips along Lake Michigan, these vehicles help us reconnect with our families, our land, and ourselves.

I've worked with families who use their fifth-wheel camper to explore state parks with their kids. I've met retirees who snowmobile every winter weekend with friends. I even have clients who maintain their ATVs like prized possessions — not just for their dollar value, but for the freedom and adventure they represent.

That freedom comes with responsibility. And it's my job to help you protect it.

The Real Value of Your "Toys"

If you've ever pulled into a campsite and watched your kids disappear into the woods with excitement — then you know the truth: these vehicles are about more than machines. They bring families closer. They pull us out of our digital lives. They're a kind of therapy we don't always talk about, but feel in our bones.

Those moments matter. And they're worth protecting.

The Flip Side of Adventure

All the joy these vehicles bring comes with real risks.

Real-Life Example

A fire claim where a snowmobile stored in a garage caught fire and caused \$90,000 in damage to both the sled and the building.

A case where a friend borrowed an ATV for a quick ride. One broken collarbone later, the owner was facing a six-figure personal responsibility claim.

None of these people were careless — they were responsible owners who loved their machines. But accidents don't wait for a warning.

Coverage That Fits Your Life

Good coverage for recreational vehicles is surprisingly affordable — especially when you consider what's at stake. Here's what to look for:

- **Damage Coverage:** Covers damage to your vehicle from crashes, fires, theft, or vandalism.
- **Personal Responsibility Coverage:** If someone is hurt or their property is damaged while using your vehicle, this covers medical and legal costs.
- **Protection from Uninsured Drivers:** Just like with your car, not everyone out there has proper insurance. This protects you if you're hit by someone who isn't covered.
- **Custom Equipment Coverage:** Many riders upgrade their vehicles — heated grips, racks, storage mods. Those additions aren't always covered automatically.

Important: Some policies don't automatically cover use on public roads or trails — especially with off-road vehicles or snowmobiles — unless you've specifically added that protection.

Seasonal Storage and Property Risks

In Northern Michigan, you might park your camper from October to May or store your snowmobiles in a pole barn until the snow flies. But even in storage, risks remain — fire, theft, storm damage, and someone being injured on your property.

Ask about off-season protections and coverage for injuries that happen on your property. These often-overlooked additions can mean the difference between peace of mind and a financial surprise.

Real-Life Example

One client — I'll call him Dave — let a friend borrow his side-by-side for a quick ride. An innocent favor. The friend lost control, hit a tree, and broke his arm. The friend sued. Dave's standard home policy didn't cover it because the ATV wasn't listed on his policy with the right personal responsibility coverage. It cost Dave significantly — all because of a gap he didn't know he had.

How We Help

At our agency, we don't sell coverage by the piece — we build it like a puzzle, fitting protection into your actual lifestyle. We'll help you:

- List your motorhome, travel trailer, and recreational vehicles correctly on your policy.
- Make sure your personal responsibility limits match your assets and lifestyle.
- Review your umbrella policy to close any dangerous gaps.
- Protect your accessories and modifications.
- Account for seasonal risks — like snow load on storage buildings or fire hazards in the off-season.

Insurance isn't about fear — it's about freedom.

Done right, coverage is what lets you live fully — knowing that if something goes wrong, you've got it handled. It gives you the freedom to ride farther, stay longer, and be present with the people who matter most.

Adventure-Ready Coverage Checklist

- Is each vehicle properly listed and described on your policy?
- Are your personal responsibility limits high enough to protect your assets?
- Do you have seasonal storage and property injury coverage in place?
- Have you included custom equipment or accessories?
- Are you covered for trail and public road use?

→ **Schedule your complimentary coverage review today.**

Chapter 5: The Impact of Business & Side Hustles

Why That "Little Business on the Side" Might Need a Big Dose of Protection

In today's world, it's not unusual to have more than one thing going on financially. A side hustle here, a passion project there. Maybe it's a woodshop in the garage, weekend consulting, or an online store you run with your spouse. These ventures can be incredibly rewarding — but they also come with strings attached.

If you've started a side business, even casually, know this: you may have unknowingly stepped into a new set of financial, legal, and personal responsibility risks. Here are the top ten things to consider before turning your passion into income — or letting that side hustle put everything else you've built at risk.

1. Business Pursuits Can Affect Your Personal Finances

Starting a business often begins with optimism — and personal money. Whether it's tools, equipment, a website, or marketing, it's easy to dip into savings or personal credit. But if the venture hits a bump, your home, savings, and other assets may be vulnerable to business debts and legal problems. Think like a business owner from day one — especially when it comes to protecting yourself.

2. The Cost of Defending Against False Allegations

It doesn't take much for a claim to surface — sometimes all it takes is an unhappy client or a contractor who gets hurt on your property. Even if the accusation has no merit, legal defense can cost thousands. Without the right business insurance, you're paying that out of your own pocket. Even "small" businesses need protection.

3. The Emotional and Mental Toll

Running a business, even a side gig, is personal. Your name is on it. Your reputation, your time, your energy. That's why the stress can feel heavier than expected. Good insurance doesn't just protect your wallet — it lets you sleep better at night, knowing that one mistake won't turn into a financial or emotional disaster.

4. The Primary Risk: Lawsuits

Lawsuits aren't just for big corporations or high-risk industries. Whether it's a friend who trips at your home studio, a client who sues over unmet expectations, or a contract that falls apart, the legal exposure is very real. Business responsibility coverage is not optional — it's your lifeline.

5. Business with Family and Friends

Family and friends are often the first to support your idea. But mixing personal relationships with business can quickly lead to misunderstandings — especially when money, expectations, or accountability are involved. A friendly handshake is no substitute for a written agreement. To protect the relationship, treat the business side with structure from the start.

6. Your Home Insurance Doesn't Cover Business Property

This is something many people miss: your home insurance doesn't cover business assets. If you're storing products in the basement, running a studio from the spare bedroom, or keeping tools in the garage, they're likely not covered under your home policy. A fire, theft, or water

damage could wipe out everything you've invested — with nothing coming back to you. Business property coverage, even for home-based operations, is essential.

7. What If You Lose Income After Property Damage?

Say your side business runs out of your home, and a storm damages your roof or knocks out power for a week. You're not just facing repair bills — you're facing lost income. Business income replacement coverage can help cover that lost money while you recover. If your business is more than a hobby, income loss needs to be on your radar.

8. Coverage for Professional Mistakes

Do you give advice, offer consulting, or coach others? If so, you may need what's called professional liability coverage (also called "errors and omissions" coverage). This protects you if a client believes your service caused them financial harm — even if the claim isn't fair. One miscommunication or missed deadline could be all it takes.

9. Hiring Help Comes With Responsibilities

It's exciting when your business grows to the point of needing help. But hiring even one part-time worker comes with responsibilities — especially in Michigan, where businesses with employees are required to carry worker injury coverage. This protects employees who get hurt on the job and shields your business from lawsuits. Even hiring your neighbor's teenager to help with deliveries might count. Always ask before you assume you're exempt.

10. Your Side Hustle Is a Business — Thinking in those Terms Helps

Here's the bottom line: if you're earning money from something — whether it's a craft show, guiding fishing trips, or running a small service business — it's no longer just a hobby. It's a business. That means separating finances, having contracts, setting clear expectations, and getting proper coverage. It's not about fear — it's about freedom. The freedom to build something great without risking everything else you've worked for.

Conclusion: Secure the Dream, Don't Gamble It

You've worked hard to get where you are. Your home, your savings, your lifestyle — it's all worth protecting. Starting a business can be a great way to grow your income and your sense of purpose — but only if it's protected properly. Let's make sure your pursuit of growth doesn't become a financial liability.

Call today for a no-obligation review. Whether you're just starting your side hustle or already deep in the game, we'll help you build a protective plan that keeps your dreams intact — and your financial future secure.

Chapter 6: Why Trust Goes Both Ways

By now, you've likely noticed that I take the role of an insurance advisor seriously. Not just as someone who helps you pick a policy — but as someone who's committed to protecting your family's lifestyle, your financial future, and your peace of mind.

But here's something important that doesn't get talked about enough:

For this relationship to work the way it should, trust needs to go both ways.

I'll always do my part — asking the right questions, looking for hidden risks, and recommending coverage that fits your life, not just your policy renewal date. But there's another piece of the puzzle — and that's you.

The best protection comes when we both bring honesty, clarity, and cooperation to the table.

I'll be completely upfront with you — but I also need you to share openly with me. That means letting me know about the cabin you rent out seasonally... the collection tucked away in a safe... the part-time business you've been quietly growing in the evenings.

It's not about judgment — it's about prevention.

The truth is, I can't protect what I don't know about. And it's easy — even unintentional — to leave out key details when you assume they're "probably not a big deal." But those missing pieces can create gaps at the worst possible moment.

This Works Best as a Partnership

You don't have to know the insurance lingo. You don't need to read every line of a policy. That's my job. But I do need your help understanding what's important to you — so I can build a plan that protects it.

Ask the questions. Share the updates. Treat this as more than just a transaction. Let's have honest conversations that build real confidence — not just in your coverage, but in the person standing behind it.

Because when we both show up fully — with trust and honesty on the table — that's when we get it exactly right.

The Relationship That Protects Everything: How trust, honesty, and shared responsibility create real protection for your life and legacy.

Closing Words

If you've made it this far, then chances are you're not just looking for a better rate. You're looking for something deeper — clarity, confidence, and a relationship built on trust. You want to know that the life you've worked so hard to build is protected by someone who understands not just insurance, but you.

And that's what this has all been about.

This book wasn't written to impress you with technical language or scare you into buying coverage. It was written to start a different kind of conversation — one built on honesty, mutual respect, and the belief that protecting your family's future deserves more than 15 minutes and a quote form.

So here's your next step:

Let's talk.

No pressure. No assumptions. Just a real conversation about what matters to you and how I can help protect it.

Because trust isn't built in a brochure. It's built here — between people who show up, ask the right questions, and genuinely care about the answers.

You're Not Buying a Policy.
You're Protecting Your Legacy.

Contact:

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PO Box 1366
Gaylord, MI
Phone: (989) 732-7548 Or

Book a 30-minute Coverage Review [Scheduling Link](#)