

SPRING 2017

Summer serenity, and how to achieve it

The accommodation is booked, tickets purchased and the countdown is on for the summer holidays. There's just one more thing for business owners to consider – how best to secure your business for the break.

Many SME businesses close down for at least some time over the holiday season, which can also be a high-risk period for crime as burglars take advantage of shutdowns. The result can be a break-in, property damage, stock losses and a ruined holiday.

In some locations it's also important to consider the bushfire threat before you close up for the holidays. This year some regions face a high-risk season following dry winter conditions and unusually warm temperatures.

The red areas on the map show the areas of Australia that are expected to carry above-normal bushfire risks this summer. But also remember that bushfire can strike anywhere. Clean up around your buildings and remove any material that could be fuel for a fire.

The Country Fire Authority warns a business doesn't have to be located in the bush to face dangers, with areas in towns and on the suburban fringe affected when embers are carried ahead by strong winds. Fires in parks and reserves can also spread to nearby buildings.

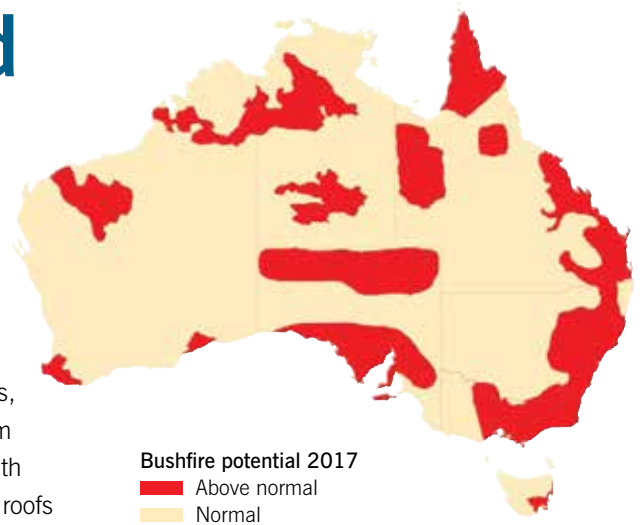
A well-prepared property has a greater chance of not catching alight.

Tips include storing flammable liquids in flameproof containers, removing flammable items from decks, verandas and underneath buildings, keeping gutters and roofs clear of leaf litter and maintaining nearby trees and shrubs and grass to reduce risk.

And, of course, it's also important to ensure you have the most appropriate insurance in place if the worst happens. Talk to us about the best ways insurance can give you confidence as you relax far from work and its worries.

When it comes to burglary, measures to give extra peace of mind include making sure the area around the premises is well-lit. That could involve installing exterior lights activated by movement, while simply leaving on an internal light can also provide an extra deterrent.

Clear signs that security systems are in place, in addition to locks, make commercial (and residential) premises less attractive, with burglars more likely to steer clear of businesses that are obviously proactive about preventing crime.



An effective alarm system can also minimise losses if thieves enter, as they know they need to act quickly to avoid being caught, while the systems can trigger faster police responses.

Visible cameras are another option for commercial premises. They deter intruders and can also provide images that can be used to track down offenders and recover stolen goods. Safes and locked areas should help ensure high-value items are kept hidden away, if possible.

If a break-in does occur, insurance should be in place for theft of equipment and stock as well as any damage caused during the break-in, with a range of covers available for business costs and impacts.

For a relaxed holiday season and peace of mind, make sure the business is as secure as possible and your insurance cover is up to date. So when you're making your preparations, make a call to us one of your "just in case" priorities.

Don't hide: act now to
create a healthy workplace



Get an early grip on mental health

SME businesses have so much on their plate that more often than not signs of mental stress creeping into the workplace are overlooked, or are merely dismissed as temporary aberrations.

But the problem will not go away. It's your business, and you should tackle any issue involving an employee's mental health head-on and as early as possible. If you don't it has the potential to end up costing much more through increased absenteeism, free-falling morale, deteriorating productivity and below-standard performance.

Work-related stress can also take a toll on business owners themselves, as they worry about generating sufficient cashflows, winning the next job contract and chasing payments from customers.

Australian businesses are already paying a heavy price, with a Medibank-funded study putting the price tag at \$12.8 billion a year, including \$11.8 billion in lost productivity. Safe Work Australia says \$480 million is paid out each year in workers' compensation for job-related mental disorders.

So what is mental health? The World Health Organisation defines it as "a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community".

While large businesses can be expected to have programs in place to deal with issues related to an employee's poor mental health, in small and medium-sized business it's often ignored or even accepted as eccentricity. According to Beyondblue's

Heads Up, it's equally important that staff working in an SME business feel valued and supported.

SME workplaces usually run on smaller staff levels, which mean trust and respect within the team and between employees and owners are even more important.

The good news for SME owners is that there are a number of simple, effective actions to creating a mentally healthy workplace.

Heads Up has produced a 10-point guide to help business owners. It says actions that could be taken include raising awareness within the workplace of the importance of mental health, reducing the stigma associated with mental issues, encouraging staff to seek early treatment and support, monitoring and managing people's workloads and providing regular performance feedback.

Beyond that, don't delay meeting up with us to discuss how you can enhance your cover for work-related mental stress claims – the most expensive form of workers' compensation claims because of the often lengthy absences from work that eventuate.

It is also an opportunity to see if you can take out cover for mental health, because most workers' compensation policies only apply to employees.

Workers' compensation insurance is compulsory but there are variations among the states.

Give us a call and we'll take over the stress of working out a policy that suits you, your business and your budget.

Leave nothing to chance with contractors

Hiring contractors or outsourcing is complex enough. The last question on any business owner's mind may be whether the workers entering the premises have suitable insurance cover.

It's an often-overlooked aspect that can have serious ramifications when things go wrong, potentially leading to big problems that can cause endless headaches and blown budgets.

In the case of personal injury, a company's own general liability policy typically covers the business owner and employees for incidents where a customer on the premises is hurt and pursues legal redress.

Examples include the case of a busy café or store, where a customer slips on liquid spilled by an employee and is injured before staff have a chance to clean the floor.

It's when contractors and sub-contractors are called in for a specific project that the potential risks for business owners become more complicated when there's an accident or damage.

That could include injury to someone who tumbles on uneven flooring or trips over cables left unsecured while repair and maintenance work is underway.

Contractors, and the sub-contractors they in turn employ, should each have their own insurance. And it's the job of the business owner whose premises they're working on to make sure that the right covers are in place before they agree for the work to be carried out.

That includes cover for professional indemnity, public liability, property damage and worker's compensation – which is compulsory for employers.

The issue reflects the importance of protecting against vicarious liability, or the concept that a business or person can be held responsible for things they didn't do themselves.

More broadly, business owners could be left carrying the can for a variety of unplanned costs when outsourced or contracted work goes wrong.

Renovations are a typical area where projects can become fraught, and

there is potential for major damage or rectification expenses when plans go off the rails. Protection is needed for problems such as water leaks, fire damage and structural risks caused by mistakes or poor workmanship.

If a business owner takes action to recover costs and finds the contractor has no insurance and insufficient assets, it's the business owner who may well be expected to pick up the bill.

Building groups note that there can be a multitude of enterprises operating on a construction site at any time, and each should have their own public liability insurance.

The stakes are high and it pays to be careful. In personal injury, if a customer sues a business can face the expense of lawyer's fees, court costs and the settlement or judgment amounts. Claims can easily reach dizzy levels.

So it makes sense to seek professional advice from us when you're using contractors. We can tell you how to be certain the right cover and paperwork is in place. Talk to us well before you start that project.



Cover all bases: contractors must have adequate insurance



Travel insurance: as essential as your ticket

Risky business: travel can
so easily go wrong

Whether you're travelling for leisure or for work, the same risks abound that can turn your seemingly safe trip awry and end up as a costly affair personally or to the business.

Flight delays and cancellations caused by bad weather, falling ill suddenly, lost baggage... it's a very long list. But despite the well-understood risks a traveller faces, travel insurance remains pretty much poorly understood.

About 87% of travellers are not clear that insurance policies do not cover all destinations as standard, according to a new survey by Understand Insurance and smartraveller.gov.au.

The same survey finds nearly 90% of intending travellers aren't aware that standard travel policies don't cover motorcycle riding overseas, and about 33% admit to buying the cheapest policy without considering other factors.

Alarmingly, more than half of cruise ship passengers and people planning to embark on such a trip in the next two years mistakenly believe the Government will pay for their care and evacuation if they fall ill.

So what is travel insurance, and is it so difficult to get it right?

Understand Insurance describes travel insurance as a protection against financial losses caused by a wide range

of events that can affect your trip, and these could happen before, during or even after the trip.

Travel insurance is a must-have for all travel, whether by air or land or sea, for business or pleasure.

We think you should have your travel insurance sorted out at the same time as you finalise your travel plans, so that you will be compensated should your trip be cancelled due to events that are covered by the policy.

Even for domestic travel, it's easy to be complacent and assume nothing can go wrong. But things can and do go wrong. It's not uncommon for flights to be cancelled around the country because of severe hailstorm or strong winds, for example, leaving thousands of passengers in limbo.

If you find yourself stranded somewhere because of a last-minute flight cancellation and need emergency lodging for the night, your travel insurance may be your saviour if you have taken out cover as part of your routine risk management strategy.

Delay no more. Give us a buzz and we will be more than delighted to work out a tailor-made cover to have all your bases covered when you head off for that crucial client meeting or that much-deserved vacation.

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A.I.S. Insurance Brokers Pty Ltd

137 Moray Street
South Melbourne 3205
PO Box 7760
Melbourne Victoria 3004

Telephone: 03 8699 8888
Facsimile: 03 8699 8899
insure@aisinsurance.com.au
www.aisinsurance.com.au