



## **Are You Doing Everything To Protect Your Own Family? A Primer in Uninsured Motorist Coverage (UM) and Underinsured Motorist Coverage (UIM)**

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Many people ask how much liability coverage they should carry. Most people carry substantial amounts of liability coverage in the event they are sued; but they often fail to purchase enough uninsured motorist coverage (UM) and underinsured motorist coverage (UIM) to protect themselves and their family.

When you or a member of your family are insured by a driver who is driving an uninsured vehicle, the Uninsured Motorist (UM) coverage on your family's car will pay for your injuries. Since insurance coverage is not mandatory in Wisconsin, and there are often people who drive vehicles without insurance, this coverage is essential. However, the minimum UM policy amount is \$25,000.00, and many people do not purchase higher limits. If a member of your family is seriously injured by an uninsured driver, wouldn't you want the highest coverage available so that your family member's medical bills, lost wages as well as pain and suffering are fairly compensated?

Underinsured Motorist (UIM) coverage pays the difference between the at fault driver's insurance policy limit and the actual damages incurred by a member of your family up to the limit of your UIM coverage. For example, if another driver with only \$25,000 of insurance coverage strikes your car and causes injuries to you with damages of \$100,000, you would receive \$75,000 from your UIM coverage if you had UIM coverage in the amount of \$100,000. If your UIM coverage is only \$50,000 you would receive \$25,000 from the other driver's insurance company, and \$25,000 from your UIM coverage, but be uncompensated for your other \$50,000 of damages.

If you own more than one car and insure through the same insurance policy, you cannot "stack" the UM and UIM coverage which exists on each vehicle you own. The statutes and case law have changed in the past several years in this regard, so it is more important than ever to check your insurance to make sure you have adequate UM and UIM coverage.

In the past several years, the Wisconsin appellate courts have ruled on a number of cases involving UM and UIM coverage. There are frequently questions concerning the ambiguity of the policy language and the extent of coverage. In some situations, family members may not be covered if they are no longer residents of the household where the insured vehicle is kept.

UM and UIM coverage is complicated, yet should be an important part of protecting your family with proper insurance coverage. Contact your insurance agent to make sure you are fully protected. The premiums are usually very low compared to your liability coverage. If you are involved in an accident you should consult with an attorney immediately to make sure all available insurance coverage is investigated to help pay for your family's injuries.

