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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**HEADING OFF TO COLLEGE?  
BE SURE YOU'RE PROTECTED WITH ADEQUATE INSURANCE COVERAGE**  
*NYIA Offers Tips for Insuring College Students' Possessions*

**Albany, N.Y., Aug. 27, 2013**—The days of going to college with a few clothes, pen, paper and a typewriter have long since passed. Now the typical student brings an expensive array of personal possessions with them to college that would be difficult to replace if stolen or damaged in a fire or other disaster. It is more critical now than ever before for students to have adequate insurance protection, according to the New York Insurance Association (NYIA).

College students and their parents will be spending a great deal of money on everything from dormitory furnishings to books. The average purchase of back-to-college merchandise is expected to exceed \$800 this year, according to the [National Retail Federation](#).

“Sophisticated electronics and expensive sports equipment are increasingly common on campuses around the country, with students bringing thousands of dollars worth of personal possessions with them to college,” Ellen Melchionni, president of NYIA said. “And with the many costs associated with going to college, the last thing students or their parents need is to pay to replace high-priced items due to theft, fire or another disaster.”

Theft is a major concern on college campuses. In fact, the [U.S. Department of Education](#) reports that there were more than 20,000 thefts in 2011. Unfortunately, this is not the only potential disaster facing college students; fires are on the rise on college dormitories nationwide from 3,200 fires in 1980 to 3,740 fires in 2009, according to the National Fire Protection Association. Most of the fires are cooking-related so students should be careful about the types of hot plates and microwaves they plan to bring to school.

Additional insurance may not be necessary. If the student lives in a dorm, most personal possessions are covered under their parents' homeowners or renters insurance policies. However, some home insurance policies may limit the amount of insurance for off-premises belongings to 10 percent of the total amount of coverage for personal possessions. “This means if the student’s parents have \$70,000 worth of insurance for their belongings, only \$7,000 would be applicable to possessions in the dorm,” Melchionni said. “But, not all insurance policies include this type of limit, so you should check with your agent or company representative about your specific policy.”

Computer and electronic equipment and items such as jewelry may also be subject to coverage limits under a standard homeowners policy. If the limits are too low, parents can consider buying a special personal property floater or an endorsement for these items. There are also stand-alone insurance policies for computers and cell phones.

Students and their parents can also consider purchasing a stand-alone policy specifically designed for students living away at college. This can be an economical way to provide additional insurance coverage for a variety of potential losses.

(more)

Students who live off campus are likely not covered by their parents' homeowners policy and may need to purchase their own renters insurance. Parents should consult with their insurance agent or company representative to see if their homeowners or renters policy extends to off-campus living situations.

For students going off to college, NYIA recommends the following:

- **Leave valuables at home if possible**  
While it may be necessary to take a computer or sports equipment to campus, other expensive items, such as valuable jewelry, luxury watches or costly electronics, should be left behind or kept in a local safety deposit box.
- **Create a “dorm inventory”**  
Before leaving home, students should make a detailed inventory of all the items they are taking with them, and revise it every year. Having an up-to-date inventory will help settle insurance claims faster in the event of theft, fire or other types of disasters. For an easy way to create an inventory, use the Insurance Information Institute's free home inventory software, available at [www.KnowYourStuff.org](http://www.KnowYourStuff.org).
- **Engrave electronics**  
Engrave electronic items such as computers, televisions and portable devices like iPods with the student's name or other identifying information that can help police track the stolen articles.

NYIA offers the following advice to guard against theft of your personal belongings on campus:

- Always lock your dorm room door and keep your keys with you at all times, even if you leave briefly. And not just at night—most dorm thefts occur during the day. Insist your roommates do the same.
- Do not leave belongings unattended on campus. Whether you are in class, the library, the dining hall or other public areas, keep book bags, purses and laptops with you at all times. These are the primary areas where property theft occurs.
- Buy a laptop security cable and use it. A combination lock that needs decoding may be just enough to dissuade a thief.

If a student is planning to have a car on campus, choose a safe, reliable vehicle and do some research to find the best auto insurance rate. Your first stop should be your own insurance company as it may offer a multi-policy discount. If you decide to keep the student's car at home, be sure to contact your auto insurance company, as many insurers give discounts for students who are living at a school that is at least 100 miles from home.

The New York Insurance Association (NYIA®) is a state trade association that has represented the property and casualty insurance industry for more than 130 years. For more information about NYIA, visit [www.nyia.org](http://www.nyia.org).