

Q: How can I lower my insurance costs?

A. Talk about maddening: Even though your house is almost certainly worth less than it was a year or two ago, you'll most likely have to pay more to insure it this year. After a 23% increase over the past five years, premiums on homeowners policies are expected to rise another 3% in 2009 as insurance companies seek to offset their recent investment losses with price hikes. You can cut your premium costs by as much as 20% if you take advantage of commonly offered discounts (see below). And you may be able to save hundreds more by following the steps in the action plan at right.

ACTION PLAN

- Raise your deductible. Going from a \$250 to a \$2,500 deductible can cut the cost of insuring a \$300,000 home by \$400 a year.

- Shop around, getting quotes at least once every three years.

- Check your CLUE (Comprehensive Loss Underwriting Exchange) report; which details your past claims, at choicetrust.com. Errors can result in higher premiums.

Not all savings will be shown below.

Combine Home
And Auto
Policies
Save up to \$300

Install Deadbolt
Locks
Save \$50

Update Heating,
Plumbing, &
Electrical
Save \$250

Install Hurricane
Shutters Or Roof
Tire downs
Save \$150

Put In Central
Burglar And Fire
Alarms
Save \$350