

Surplus Lines Newsletter
Commissioner's Column

As Commissioner of Insurance during these challenging times, I've spent much time working with legislators on tough budget issues facing North Carolina government. I want to assure you that, despite cuts in our budget, the Department is striving to maintain our high level of service to North Carolina consumers, licensees, and other industry folks. We are working hard and have some exciting new initiatives to share with you.

You may have already visited our redesigned Department Web site at www.ncdoi.com. Not only have we listened to your feedback and streamlined the way you find information, we are using YouTube, and facebook to create a virtual industry community.

We also established an e-mail notification list specifically for surplus lines licensees to receive important notifications from the Agent Services Division concerning licensing matters, compliance issues, legislative updates, and new online services. E-mail provides timely communication, is budget conscious and environmentally friendly. Licensees and other interested parties may subscribe to these surplus lines e-mail notifications through the following link <http://lists.ncmail.net/mailman/listinfo/surpluslines>.

The Department's Agent Services Division also provides access to online licensee services that allow you to perform many licensing functions for yourself, check your Continuing Education records, and review your license status. Be sure to regularly check the "Hot Topics Section" on the Department's Web site. It will help you keep abreast of current issues that may impact your license and help you stay in compliance with licensing regulations.

Renew Your License Online – Effective in 2009, the Agent Services Division will process all 9/1 license renewals for resident and non-resident individual surplus line licensees electronically through the National Insurance Producer Registry (NIPR). NIPR is a non-profit affiliate of the National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC). You will be able to pay your surplus lines renewal fee online by credit card or electronic check and then print the confirmation. Please note that the Department will not mail renewal payment confirmation. You should use this NIPR confirmation feature and access the Department's online agent information portal to view your renewed license status at www.ncdoi.com. Agent Services Division will be sending you a detailed notification of how this NIPR renewal process will work.

Review and Update Your Address Online – Updating your address is now easier than ever since individual licensees may now submit address change requests online through NIPR's Address Change Request (ACR) function on the Department's Web site, www.ncdoi.com. Simply select the address change link under online licensee services, enter your state, your National Producer Number (NPN), and your last name. There is no transaction fee in North Carolina to make an address change through this NIPR service. But licensees are required to notify Agent Services Division of a change in residence address within ten (10) days. A law effective Jan. 1, 2008 allows the Department to charge a \$50 administrative fee for failure to provide notification of a change in residence address within 10 days.

North Carolina License Number – In the past, your social security number was your North Carolina insurance license number. In May 2006, all insurance producers in North Carolina were assigned a National Producer Number (NPN). The NPN is the unique identification number assigned to you by NIPR. To address the security issues concerning social security numbers, North Carolina now uses the NPN as your official North Carolina insurance license number.

While you still must provide your social security number to the Department for licensing purposes, you should use your NPN to identify your license number when contacting the Agent Services Division and to all other interested parties for licensing matters. Your NPN number will also be required to renew your license electronically through NIPR. You can access your NPN through the NIPR website, www.NIPR.com or use the link provided under online licensee services on the Department's Web site.

Continuing Education – Many licensees are not aware that N.C. continuing education (CE) rules allow them to request an extension or an exemption for hardship such as medical disability or military deployment. The extension request procedure was designed to help agents avoid license expiration because of non-compliance with CE.

No more than 30 days before the end of your compliance period, complete the Request for CE Extension Form and submit it to Prometric along with an administrative fee of \$75. Requests will not be accepted without this fee or earlier than 30 days before the compliance period end date. To verify that your extension is in place, visit www.prometric.com, or call Prometric directly at 866-241-3121. Hardship exemptions are granted on a case-by-case basis. See the form posted at www.prometric.com or contact Prometric for details.

If you have questions or would like more information about any of these changes or upgrades, please contact the Agent Services Division at 919-807-6800.