

Are My Electronic and /or Custom Property Covered?

Warning! Car Stereos, Car Phones and Other Mobile Electronics. They May Not Be Covered.

A basic auto policy is designed and priced so that it only covers certain vehicle features. It is important to understand that you might have need extra coverage to take care of expensive vehicle options such as custom or electronic property.

Factory Options

Factory installed vehicle options are included in the vehicle identification and symbol numbering scheme used by most insurance companies. (Note: if you're not familiar with these terms, please read "Do You Know About Auto Symbols?"). While traditional features are accounted for and covered by an auto policy, manufacturers sometimes jump ahead of insurance policy designers. In the past, theft deterrent car radios installed by the factory (which are disabled when removed from the dash board) were not covered by many auto policies. It is important to read your particular auto policy to make sure that it doesn't contain this gap in coverage.

Dealer Options

Factory installation does not apply to autos that are modified by a conversion specialist or an auto dealer before being displayed for sale. Car dealers frequently add options to make their inventory more attractive to car buyers (and more profitable). Spoilers, body side moldings, special wheels and hub caps, body paint, car phones, speakers and stereos, pin stripes and conversion packages can be added directly onto the dealer invoice. Insurers cannot adjust their premiums for these additional features unless they're told about them, including how much they cost. If you're not sure what is original and what has been added, ask your local dealer. If the information on options is not shared with the insurer, the unknown options may not be covered after a loss.

What Are Your Options?

You can ignore the whole issue, but you risk the chance that some of your valuable property may be uninsured. The prudent choice is to share your information with your local insurance professional. Together, you can take the steps to get the coverage you need. Remember, even when options aren't covered by a basic policy, you can arrange to add the necessary protection.