



Evaluating Your Tribal Casino's Insurance Coverage

by Tina Duncan

There is a lot to consider when it comes to protecting tribal property and employees and covering liability exposures. The following are some key points to consider when evaluating your insurance coverages.

Monitor Rising Premium Rates

Controlling expenses is pivotal for tribal casinos, which spend more than half of their operating costs on payroll and employee benefits. Gaming entities can't afford to ignore inflated insurance premium costs. Some insurance providers hike premiums annually, or automatically increase the values of the property being insured overtime – even for equipment that's no longer operational. Know exactly what you're paying for, and speak up if you're being overcharged.

Read the Fine Print for Exclusions

Many non-tribally owned insurance providers offer high blanket limits that may seem appealing initially, until tribes read the fine print. Blanket limits, like \$1 billion worth of coverage, are generally subject to various terms and high deductibles. Exclusions in insurance coverage can also prove detrimental to tribal governments and businesses that believe they're covered for a catastrophe, like a flood, until they discover the policy excludes their high-risk flood zone.

Train and Encourage Workforce to Take Safety Seriously

Casinos oftentimes have employees injured on the job due to failure to exercise appropriate safety measures. Your insurer should provide safety training and on-site inspections of property and equipment at no additional cost. Workplace safety education is vital; your insurer should help instill a workforce culture that values holistic safety. When employees proactively remedy or report hazards like walking obstacles or wet surfaces, the number of injuries drastically drops. When supervisors reinforce employee attention to safety with praise, it not only boosts employee morale, it keeps staff and patrons injury-free.

Attract and Retain Employees with Competitive Benefits

Benefits can enhance employees' job satisfaction and may come into play if an employee is weighing the advantages of seeking work elsewhere. Comprehensive and cost-effective employee benefits solutions should include health, dental,

vision, accident, short and long-term disability, critical illness and more. Your preferred insurance provider should offer a streamlined enrollment system as well as continuous representative involvement.

Uphold Tribal Values

Select a competitive Tribal Workers' Compensation (TWC) program that provides medical, wage loss, permanent disability and death benefits that rival statutory workers' compensation – without sacrificing the tribes ability to determine its level of coverage. Tribal gaming entities can avoid the fraud and abuse that's prevalent in state systems through a sovereign TWC program that appoints seasoned, tribal attorneys and pursues arbitration hearings to avoid lengthy court battles.

Implement a Return-to-Work Program

In the unfortunate event of an employee injury involving lost time from work, an effective return-to-work program can aid in the rehabilitation and recovery, creating a smoother process for both employer and employee. By providing modified duties that accommodates any restrictions set by a doctor, the casino is also able to control the indemnity cost by decreasing or eliminating the wage loss benefits being paid.

Identify Key Risks, Then Create an Insurance Plan

Tribal gaming entities are not a one-size-fits-all risk model. Talk to a trusted broker about your tribal business' key risks, and then design an insurance program around those risks. Property, liability and workers' compensation policies should be uniquely crafted to protect tribal assets, while considering cultural preferences.

Reevaluate Your Insurance Plan Regularly

The only real way for tribes to know if they are over paying for the coverage they need is to shop around. There are a minimum of four worker's compensation carriers serving tribal gaming entities. If you're not seeing four choices from your broker, you're probably paying too much. Get a new quote annually, or at the very least, every three years. ♣

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