When we insure our coach we have two options regarding its collision coverage. One is “ACV” or Actual Cash Value. The second option is “Agreed Value”. In the first case, with ACV we are trusting the insurance company to write us a check for their understanding of the value of the coach if it is totaled. Obviously that is a risk and puts us in the position of having to sue the insurance company if we disagree with what they think the coach is worth. It is unlikely an insurance company is going to be generous so if we have ACV coverage it means we probably will not be happy. Before you even consider that type of coverage ask yourself if you trust the insurance company enough to pay you what you think your coach is worth.

Agreed Value means we and the insurance company know upon binding of the insurance policy how much we will be paid for the coach if it is totaled because we agree on its valuation and it is stated clearly on the policy. However, the agreed value has to be reasonable, and as the term says it has to be agreed between both the insurance company and the insured. Keep in mind even with agreed value it is likely an insurance company will deduct depreciation. More about that later.

The question is how to get an agreed value policy or to maintain one that has been in effect since the coach was purchased. Usually if the coach was recently purchased a bill of sale is consider adequate proof of value. But that is not always the case. Some private sale values may be questioned and rejected by the insurance company. A second way to arrive at an agreed value is to submit photos, lists and dates of improvements, documentation as to the maintenance history or condition, and maybe a letter expressing the value from an industry “expert” such as the converter. Sometimes an underwriter will accept the information provided to support your interpretation of the value of your coach.

We all have the options above available to us. If we can get the insurance company to accept the bill of sale we are done. Usually if the bill of sale is from a dealer there will be no question. If it is from an individual it may not be accepted as adequate which brings us to the second option. If we can convince an underwriter of the value with photos, documentation and proof of condition along with a list of comparable listing prices that might prove satisfactory. The problem is if we opt to go that route there is no consistency among insurers. They all will not ask for the same information, and some will accept things other insurers will not. The insurance company needs to be satisfied it is not over insuring a coach and different underwriters may look for different things from us to support the presumed value of the coach. The use of a bill of sale as proof of value is only going to be acceptable immediately after the coach purchase. Usually after two or three years other proof of value must be provided.

Our third option is an appraisal. If an appraisal firm with the credentials provides the appraisal it is almost a certainty all insurance companies will accept the appraisal for purposes of agreed value. But there are some issues with that approach. It has been reported fairly often when appraisers, even those named as acceptable by the insurer, have been contacted they appear clueless about what a Prevost is. Even if they recognize the Prevost name, there is no assurance they will be able to do a fair evaluation of the coach. They may not appreciate or understand the difference between converters, or the impact on value slides make. They might not know what OTR means. An internet search of RV appraisal experts proves the difficulty of securing a quality appraisal of our coaches, especially since so few appraisers have appraised or even had occasion to even see a Prevost. So even the third option can be frustrating for owners because of the effort required to find an appraiser that is actually qualified to arrive at the real value of a coach. The market for Prevost coaches is very small so as a result there are no available “blue book” values.

It was once stated by an owner that to get an appraisal for his coach he would just keep getting appraisals from RV appraisers until one of the appraisers came up with a value he could live with. So maybe appraiser shopping is a forth option if you don’t mind the insanity of paying for appraisals until you get one you liked. Then when you do get an appraisal you like the insurance company is likely to accept it, take your premiums, and then if and when the time comes to write you a check for the full amount for the coach due to a loss, the insurance company might balk. The real option is to deal with an appraiser that actually knows the market, that understands how as times change, depreciation and values change, and who recognizes the value differences between coaches with slides and non-slide coaches, how different conversions are valued by the market, and what factors add or detract real value from a coach. That appraisal will hold up in court if it ever gets to that point.

From the research to draft this article two names of qualified Prevost appraisers came up often. They are Pinnacle Auto Appraisers (877-988-9911). Patrick is the Prevost appraiser. Pinnacle will have an appraiser come to your coach, but that appraiser is not likely to be an expert on Prevost coaches, but may be under contract to provide first hand information to Patrick.

If you opt to have an appraiser come to view the coach you will have to have the following ready or available:

The year, make, and model of the coach
The location of the coach
Name and contact information of person meeting the appraiser
A list of options, improvements, etc.
A list of maintenance, logs, receipts, etc.

And of course payment for the appraisal.

A second option is to do the entire appraisal by email. This imposes a greater burden on us, but nothing requested is inconsistent with what we would expect to provide as supporting the coach valuation. We will have to provide photos, the angle and scope of the photos will be defined and will be of interior and exterior. You may have to include a photo of the odometer, any improvements, copies of service records, plus any other related evidence that will help the appraiser arrive at a value.

If you wish to do an email appraisal with Pinnacle you can expect to have to provide at least the following:

6 to 8 photos of the exterior, covering all sides
10 or more photos of the interior
2 or more of the engine and engine bay
At least one of the odometer
One of the VIN

And of course the payment for the appraisal

The second appraisal company named often is Automotive Appraisal Services (800-495-2525). Mark Koch is the Prevost appraisal expert. Automotive Appraisal Services will do an in person appraisal, but it is limited to areas in close proximity to their offices, however they have a program called an Appraisal Information Report (AIR) in which you fill out a 12 page document with coach specific information and provide photos and the appraisal is complete within 4 or 5 days from their receipt of the document.

Automotive Appraisal Services offers some features relating to their services. If you upgrade your coach after the appraisal, and provide them with documentation Mark indicated he will provide a revised appraisal for free. Additionally he indicated his appraisals have never been rejected by an insurance company, but if that should ever happen, supply him with proof of the rejection and the money paid will be returned.

One thing worth remembering when dealing with an appraiser. Never fail to tell the appraiser what you think the coach is worth. If you estimate of its value is off the charts the appraiser may press you for information to justify your claim, or he may tell you why he cannot reach that value, and explain why. By telling the appraiser what you believe the value to be you are providing him with some insight and when discussing your estimate it may reveal something you know that adds value, but had overlooked. Don’t be shy.

In all cases appraisals by either appraisal company are going to be in the $300 range.

Previously discussed was how an insurance company is likely to treat the agreed value as valid the day the policy becomes effective, and from that point apply depreciation to that value. Here is where your appraiser can work with you to maintain you desired level of financial protection. As you improve the coach with upgrades to the A/V equipment, or you install new flooring or rebuild an engine you want that reflected in your coach value. Ask your appraiser if they provide a service to reflect changes to a previous appraisal, and allow you to re-submit the new appraisal to your insurance company. That is an excellent and low or no cost way to maintain your coaches appraisal to reflect improvements in value.

It is up to you to keep the insurance company advised of expensive repairs, updates or other factors that have the potential to change the coach value.
In doing the research for this topic several things became very clear. There are insurers who know what a Prevost conversion is. They understand what they are, how a chassis is converted to create a motor home, and how the economy affects their value. Those insurers and their agents will not go silent if you call them and want to talk about insurance for a converted coach. When you contact an agent regarding insurance for your coach that agent should know and understand what you are talking about when you say “Prevost”, “Prevost conversion”, or “Prevost motor home conversion”. That same agent gets instant credibility if they actually know what you are talking about if they know what you mean when you say Marathon or Vantare or Royale or Millennium.

Both appraisers mentioned previously have been named by the insurance companies we recognize as serving us best in insuring our coaches, and they have relationships with the insurance agents a lot of us use. Both are familiar with dealers, converters and both have worked for a number of them.

The number of companies that specialize in Prevost conversions is very limited. You may be able to get quotes and coverage from companies whose name just rolls off your tongue, but be very, very careful because they may not provide the coverage needed to protect your coach. An insurer who knows and understands the difference between a Prevost conversion and a conventional motor home is not going to disagree with the need to have repairs done by Prevost or a designated Prevost repair center or the converter or both. On the other hand some insurers are going to insist the repairs be made at the closest RV dealership. While that dealer may be well qualified to repair a conventional RV it is improbable he will be qualified to deal with our coaches.

The need for an appraisal goes beyond obtaining an appraisal for insurance purposes. If you are a buyer or a seller having an appraisal may be required to assist in completing the transaction. Buyers, especially first time buyers, will view a detailed appraisal as assurance the price on a coach is justified. Sellers will benefit by knowing pricing is in line with the market. If a coach is to be financed lenders who are not familiar with the Prevost market will base their lending on the valuation. Most appraisers will issue an addendum to add a coach buyer’s name on an appraisal so that document can be used to support a request for financing. It should be noted that an appraisal is a legal document, and in the event of a legal dispute for any reason it has substantial value.

We are not in the business of selling insurance or appraisals or valuing coaches. But as owners we know that we have to properly justify the value of our coaches to insurers. We also know we have to deal with insurers who specialize in Prevost conversions because when we have to turn to our insurer to cover needed repairs the last thing we want to deal with is an adjuster who expects repairs can be made at any RV dealer.

Jon W. Wehrenberg September 19, 2015