

CAR CORNER

Renting A Car: What Everyone Should Know

(NAPSA)—Learning a few key facts about car rental can help you get on the road to...getting back on the road.

Renting a car can be confusing and expensive if you don't understand industry terms and how fees are calculated. If you have a poor driving record, renting a car may be next to impossible.

Here are some important considerations, courtesy of the Federal Trade Commission:

Choosing a Rental Company

Before you reserve a car, think about the size you want or need and how much you're willing to spend. At the same time, be aware that vehicle classification systems vary. The terms "compact," "mid-size" and "luxury" sometimes differ among companies.

Call several rental companies for price estimates, or check rates through your travel agent. Ask about specials geared to the length of time you need the vehicle. Many companies offer weekly or weekend deals. If your plans are flexible, you may be able to save money by renting a car when price breaks are available. But be sure to ask about restrictions on special offers, including blackout dates when an advertised price may not be available.

Ask if there may be charges that could increase an advertised base rate, such as Collision Damage Waiver (CDW) fees; a deposit or refundable charge; airport surcharges and drop-off fees; fuel charges; mileage fees; taxes; additional-driver fees; underage-driver fees; out-of-state charges; and equipment-rental fees.

Charges and Fees

CDW is an optional charge of \$9 to \$13 a day. Rental car agents may urge you to buy this option. Although they call it "collision damage" coverage, it's not technically collision insurance. Rather, it is a "guarantee" that the rental company will pay for damages to your rented car. By declining the waiver, you accept responsibility for any damages. However, under



Before you rent a car, make sure you understand all the terms of the rental agreement.

CDW, the company will *not* pay for bodily injuries or damages to your personal property.

The coverage offered by rental companies may duplicate insurance you have through your auto and homeowner's policies. If you're not sure about coverage, call your insurers.

A fuel charge is the amount many rental car companies add to your bill for gasoline. Some companies give you a half-tank at a charge of \$10 to \$15 and tell you to return the car empty; others fill the tank and charge for the amount of gas you use. Companies that do not charge for the initial tank may ask you to return the car with a full tank. If you don't, you'll be charged the rental company's price for gasoline. It's often much higher than what you would pay at a local station.

Mileage fees usually are assessed on a cents-per-mile basis or as a flat fee when you exceed the allotted free mileage cap. Knowing approximately how far you will drive will allow you to select the company that offers the most favorable mileage terms. For more information, call the FTC at 1-877-FTC-HELP and ask for the publication *Renting a Car*.

The FTC works for the consumer to prevent fraudulent, deceptive and unfair business practices in the marketplace and to provide information to help consumers spot, stop and avoid them. For more information, call toll-free 1-877-FTC-HELP or visit www.ftc.gov.