



For Immediate Release – July 12, 2010 at Minneapolis, Minnesota

Local Insurers Sponsor Home Ownership Education Campaign

Local insurance companies Western National Insurance Group and Austin Mutual Insurance Company today announced that they have partnered with the Minnesota Home Ownership Center in support of its new “Look Before You Leap” campaign, which empowers home owners to spot deceptive scams and to protect their most precious asset – their home. The effort engages local governments, nonprofits, community and business leaders, and citizens in preserving home ownership in Minnesota by calling attention to predatory companies’ techniques and offering home owners free alternative home preservation solutions.

The Minnesota Home Ownership Center reports that one in every 20 Minnesota homes was foreclosed upon between 2005 and 2009. As foreclosures have continued to mount, for-profit foreclosure prevention scams have arisen to prey on struggling home owners at their weakest. Incidents have boomed from only one reported to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) in 2008 to nearly 8,000 reported in 2009.

“We’re glad to help further protect the financial well-being of Minnesota’s home owners,” said Stuart Henderson, president and chief executive officer at Western National. “At a time when the troubled economy is making it easier for scams like these to take place, we believe insurance companies need to step up their efforts to support safety for vulnerable home owners.”

“Helping people understand how to recognize these scams provides the best defense against them,” said Jeffrey Kusch, president and chief executive officer at Austin Mutual. “Our thanks and support go out to the Minnesota Home Ownership Center for leading this charge.”

The Minnesota Home Ownership Center is the state's leading independent, non-profit provider of information and resources aimed at helping Minnesotans begin, and maintain, home ownership. Since 1993, the organization has served over 87,000 Minnesotans through its range of home ownership services.

Austin Mutual Insurance Company, headquartered in Maple Grove, Minn., is a regional property-and-casualty insurance company with premium writings in excess of \$90 million. The company currently operates in 33 states throughout the country. All of the group’s products are sold exclusively through professional independent agents.

Western National Insurance Group, headquartered in Edina, Minn., is a super-regional property-and-casualty insurance group writing over \$240 million in Direct Premium in ten states. The group consists of five active companies (Western National Mutual Insurance Company, Western National Assurance Company, Pioneer Specialty Insurance Company, Titan Property & Casualty Insurance Company, and Wisconsin American Mutual Insurance Company) serving personal and commercial customers in the Midwestern and Western U.S. All of the group’s products are sold exclusively through professional independent agents.

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