

# Tower Hill Celebrates 50 Years — Small Beginnings to One of Florida's Largest Residential Property Insurers

From humble beginnings to a company represented by over 1000 insurance agencies throughout the state of Florida, Tower Hill has depended on the core values set by W.T. Shively in 1972. After 50 years, the company is still owned by the same family, and holds fast to those founding values even while the original agency is now an entire family of companies in 16 additional states.

The current logo for the company is referred to as a sturdy tower on top of a hill, representing what over two million customers have found to be the strength and stability they sought from an insurance company. The following is an interview with leaders within Tower Hill, explaining its history and values during a look back at the last half a century of business.

***From its start in 1972 as Mobile Home Insurance Associates, how long did a limited scope of coverage continue before expanding into other areas?***

In 1996, the company began the transition from mobile home programs for both Personal and Commercial Lines to Homeowners (HO3) risks. Within the next two years, Dwelling Fire (DP3) and additional Homeowners (HO4 and HO6) products were launched. Commercial Lines expanded their offerings in the 2000s to include Homeowners' Associations, Self-Storage, Office Retail and Hotel/Motel.

***Was the name changed to Tower Hill Insurance in 1995, and what was the significance of the new name?***

Yes, in 1995 the company name was changed from Mobile Home Insurance Associates to Tower Hill Insurance Group. The significance of the re-naming to Tower Hill signaled a new era for the company, as it focused efforts on the homeowners market. The name "Tower Hill" was in part inspired by an area in Gainesville, Florida, where the company is headquartered.

***Is it true that the company is still owned by the founding family? Are there any original employees still working for the company?***

Yes, the founding family maintains majority ownership. Other than the founding family, there are several employees who joined Tower Hill in the 1990s who are

still at the company. Uniquely, for some team members working at the company has become a family tradition. Several current employees have parents, or aunts and uncles, who joined the company in the 1990s and 2000s.

***When and how did the transformation into one of Florida's largest residential property insurers happen?***

A key turning point was Hurricane Andrew in 1992.

Because the managing general agency (MGA) had limited exposure, it could focus on writing new business after the hurricane. Meanwhile, many of the larger insurers were focused on recovering from the storm or ended up leaving the state of Florida entirely.

***What are some of the most significant milestones in the company?***

The partnership with Omega Insurance Company in 1987 was a significant milestone. Expanding the product offerings to Homeowners (HO3) policies in 1996 proved integral in the company's future partnerships with Regency (1997) and DeSoto Prime (2003). By acquiring these partner companies, Tower Hill began the transition from strictly an MGA to a risk-bearing entity.

In 2017, the company renewed its focus on diversification by launching Tower Hill Specialty to expand Personal Lines beyond Florida. Similarly, Commercial Lines has also expanded regionally from Florida to Alabama, South Carolina and Texas. Tower Hill now writes business in a total of 17 states. On the eve of the company's 50th anniversary, launching Tower Hill Insurance Exchange positions Tower Hill to most effectively adapt to a dynamic and rapidly changing insurance market.

***How did Tower Hill successfully transition from a founder-run organization to a scalable enterprise?***

Building a strong leadership team, along with a series of strategic mergers and acquisitions, has enabled Tower Hill



**Tower Hill founder  
W.T. Shively**





to successfully transition from an insurance agency to an MGA, then into a family of companies. Owning the carriers and managing all facets of the operations allowed Tower Hill to control its destiny. Companies acquired and launched by Tower Hill include those specializing in technology and claims, as well as insurance and reinsurance.

As a company Tower Hill's approach has consistently been to remain as strong and prepared as possible, while at the same time being flexible enough to allow for being proactive rather than only reactive. Also, an emphasis on building solid agency partnerships has been integral to Tower Hill's growth and success.

***Who are key personnel besides the founder? (in alphabetical order)***

- Lane Bussey, CFO Tower Hill Insurance Companies
- Kevin Kasitz, CEO Tower Hill Prime Insurance Company
- Ralph Kubicsek, chief technology officer
- Kirk La, CEO Tower Hill Insurance Group
- Andres Marin, chief information officer
- Laura Marin, SVP, chief actuary
- Martin McCarty, CFO Tower Hill Insurance Group
- John Phillips, COO
- Scott Rowe, chief claims officer and general counsel
- John Spritzky, president, Tower Hill Specialty
- Daniela Wheeler, chief underwriting officer
- Nathan Wycoff, SVP, chief risk officer

***What changes have come over the years in business models in the company? MGA to risk-bearing entity?***

Starting in 1987 with the Omega partnership, Tower Hill managed all facets of the business requirements for individual partner carriers. Strategic acquisitions — along with financial strength, solid reinsurance, and technology advances — have allowed for nimbleness in a dynamically changing market.

***How is Tower Hill different at its 50th milestone compared to its 25th anniversary?***

By the company's 25th anniversary, Tower Hill had grown to just over 100 employees after moving to a larger location the prior year. The Dwelling Fire (DP3) program was introduced in 1997, which became the company's third product. Two and a half decades later, the Tower Hill Family of Companies includes more



***On the left, the cover of the company's original brochure. On the right, Keyton Benson adjusting a Hurricane Andrew claim in 1992.***

than 450 employees, a total of six locations, and writes business in 17 states.

Today, Tower Hill is a regional provider of both Personal Lines and Commercial Lines products. When the MGA celebrated its 25th anniversary the managed in-force premium totaled \$112.5 million at yearend (as of Dec. 31, 1997). Midway through Tower Hill's 50th anniversary in-force premium totaled \$915.9 million (as of June 30, 2022).

***How has technology evolved at Tower Hill over the years?***

With a focus on technology, Tower Hill introduced online rating and training for agencies in 2001. Over the decades, the company has grown from a couple of servers with a dial up modem to a hybrid cloud platform with gigabits of bandwidth across six office locations leveraging the latest technologies from multiple cloud and SaaS providers. Secure agent and customer portals are user-friendly and will continue to be improved upon to provide the best user experience.

Today, digital platforms such as email, SMS, web, and social media have become the predominant channels for communication with agents and customers/members. Tower Hill is constantly evolving to improve and has exciting projects slated for the future including a contact center upgrade and an R&D area focused on additional use cases for machine learning and artificial intelligence. We take cyber security very seriously and have a dedicated team of people who ensure our systems are monitored 24/7/365.

***What about distribution systems, and changes in regulations?***

Independent insurance agencies have been our primary distribution system since 1972. In recent years, we have also forged strong partnerships with agency franchises.



Conversely, Tower Hill Specialty primarily relies on the MGA distribution system model. We remain committed to the independent agency distribution system.

No surprise, for Tower Hill the most significant regulatory changes within the last five decades have involved these select coverages: sinkhole, mold, water/wind, and roofs. Similarly, the challenges created by Assignment of Benefits (AoB) have resulted in increased litigation. These regulatory issues have proved challenging not only for Tower Hill, but for the Florida insurance market. However, the company's financial strength and nimbleness have allowed Tower Hill to adjust as needed.

***Company culture can make or break a company. Does the founders' company culture still drive company culture today? Has that contributed to Tower Hill's longevity?***

Tower Hill strives to uphold the down-to-earth, family atmosphere established by the company's founders. Understanding that the success of our business depends on the success of our people, the company is committed to nurturing talent and rewarding outstanding performance.

The 50th anniversary speaks to durability and survival. The next 50 years will likely be more challenging, and potentially more rewarding.

***How is Tower Hill preparing for what comes next? How is the company focusing on the future?***

Shifting to a reciprocal exchange business model for Florida Personal Lines is integral to Tower Hill's continued success in Florida and beyond. While Tower Hill's commitment to Florida remains steadfast, the company continues to diversify with additional product lines and expanding geographically.

With the transition to Tower Hill Insurance Exchange, Personal Lines customers become Exchange members. Key to this shift is a renewed focus on the overall customer/member experience, to maintain high levels of satisfaction and retention. Through leveraging technology and a range of resources, Tower Hill is focused on further streamlining the claims process to ensure that every claim is handled in a timely, accurate and fair manner.

***Many companies spend too much in angst over what they're going to do, and not enough time executing. How has Tower Hill stayed focused on executing its goals? How has Tower Hill stayed relevant?***

Tower Hill has remained true to its core principles, managing exposure, ensuring rate adequacy, caring for our agents and customers, and carrier financial stability. By achieving a balance of these key elements, the company has grown strategically while maintaining strength and flexibility to focus on moving forward. 📌