It pays to shop for car insurance

By Jerry Hirsch, Los Angeles Times

It pays to shop around for car insurance. California rates can vary by as much as a third for the same driver in the same car at the same address.

An analysis by CarInsurance.com, an Internet car insurance clearinghouse, looked at rates for an unmarried 40-year-old male who commutes 12 miles to work each day.

The hypothetical insurance had policy limits of $100,000 for injury liability for one person, $300,000 for all injuries and $50,000 for property damage in an accident and a $500 deductible on collision and comprehensive coverage. This hypothetical driver had a clean record and good credit.

The average annual premium from six national carriers in all ZIP codes was $1,277 for a 2012 Honda Accord. However, the least expensive premiums averaged $870, or 32 percent less. The analysis looked only at price and did not consider customer service variations between insurers.

In California the average cost for the policy was $1,428, but the least expensive was $960, or 33 percent less. The biggest swing was in Ohio where the lease expensive policy was 56 percent below the average.

“No two insurance carriers have the same way of calculating rates,” said CarInsurance.com managing editor Des Toups. “In some places the difference between the most expensive and least expensive is thousands of dollars – and the rates in our study are for low-risk drivers.”

The differences are even greater for high-risk drivers, he

said.