

Insurance Customers - Tips From Insurance Adjusters Before a Disaster

An original © article by Public Adjuster Charles R. "Dick" Tutwiler, C.P.C.L.A.

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Review your policy with your insurance agent/adviser now to make sure you have adequate coverage.

Secure a copy of your insurance policy away from your premises or business to insure the survival of one copy of the policy. A safety deposit box is a good place to put this copy.

Register now for county or city emergency special assistance.

Photograph or videotape your property, both personal and business, including buildings. Again, make two copies and keep one off the property with your insurance policy. It's a good idea to record serial numbers or identification numbers on things such as VCRs, television, etc.

Most homeowners policies do not cover flooding. You can get a separate policy from your insurance agent or call the Federal Flood Insurance Program at 1-800-638-6620.

If you live in a condominium, review your association bylaws so you understand what you are individually responsible for insuring.

AFTER THE STORM

Make temporary repairs to protect your property from further damage. You should have plywood, plastic, and other materials handy to you to make temporary repairs. Keep the receipt for these repairs and turn them in to the company when you file your claim.

Call your insurance agent, broker, or insurance company to report your loss.

Don't make extensive permanent repairs until you have seen the adjuster.

Make a list of damaged items and separate them if possible.

Do not dispose of items without prior agreement from your insurance company.

GETTING ADJUSTED

Be patient. The size of the disaster may be such that initial contact by the insurance industry will be slow in coming.

Do not be quick to settle your claim without a thorough understanding of the complete loss and damages.

If in doubt about issues of loss and value, consult an expert in the particular field in question.

If questions of coverage versus loss and damage or interpretation of policy language arise, consult with your local bar association for referral to an expert in insurance property claims. Also, most insurance companies have a process whereby you can appeal an adjuster's decision.

Be fair in your evaluation of the loss and damages. Nothing causes more problems than overreaching or overvaluing a claim.

After you have made a recovery from your insurance company, provide that information to your tax advisers so you can receive expert guidance concerning deductions for loss or taxes owed for gains.

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