

Insurance Coverage and Making a Claim

Types of Insurance

Many types of insurance may come into play during disaster recovery. If injuries or loss of life occurred, these will extend to health insurance, disability and life insurance. Home and other property cleanup and repair involve other types of insurance.

Homeowner's or renter's insurance – Generally, property insurance includes some coverage for fire or lightning damage and wind and hail damage.

Most policies cover damage from water or water blowing in only if an opening to the structure sustains damage. Some may cover basement flooding caused by sewer backup or sump pump failure. Damage from surface water, as in flood or rising water damage, is not covered by the usual private policy. Special flood insurance is available.

A homeowner's policy will include liability insurance for injuries or damages caused by you, a member of your family or a pet.

Flood insurance – A Typical homeowner's policy does not cover losses caused by flooding. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) administers the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Buildings and their contents can be insured against flood loss. Policies can be obtained through local insurance agents, although not all insurance companies are involved with the NFIP. Contact FEMA for more information.

Automobile insurance – Policies differ. Comprehensive insurance covers damage to your car from various natural disasters such as flood, fire, smoke, wind, hail, glass breakage, vandalism, theft and collision with animals. Auto liability insurance is protection against the cost of defense if the policyholder is sued for injury or damage caused by his or her car.

Making an Insurance Claim

First Step – Contact insurance company/agent and report damage. Be prepared to provide the following:

- Policyholder name
- Address
- Policy number
- Date and time of loss

The sooner a claim is filed, the sooner an adjuster will look at the damage.

Second Step – Protect property from further damage. Patch roofs temporarily, cover broken windows with boards or plastic, move furnishings, (if exposed to weather) to safe location for storage.

Third Step – Keep accurate records.

- List all cleaning and repair bills including materials, cost of rental equipment and depreciation of purchased equipment.
- List all disaster-related living expenses, including motel and restaurant bills, home rental and car rental.
- List all actual losses (furniture, appliances, clothing, artwork, food and equipment, regardless of replacement intentions. Document the value of each object lost. Household inventories, receipts, cancelled checks, charge account records, and appraisals are good ways to document the loss. If such records do not exist, estimate the value, purchase place and date.

Step Four – Contact a reputable and well-established firm or individual to repair damage. Ask friends and neighbors for recommendations and get written contracts for work. Be aware of disreputable people who try to take advantage of people after a disaster or emergency.

Step Five – Don't settle a claim too quickly. Do not settle until:

- An insurance adjuster has completed a thorough inspection of the property and repair contractor has been performed.
- Estimates for all damages have been prepared and they are fully understood. Work with the insurance adjuster and contractor on needed repairs and estimates.
- Advance insurance payments have been calculated, deductibles have been applied and the total amount of the settlement is known.
- Damaged items being kept have been identified and salvage deductions agreed upon.
- Items that won't be repaired, but for which an "appearance loss" will be paid, are identified.
- All parties, if required by the insurance company, understand time limits for repairs.

Adapted from the Disaster Handbook, University of Florida Cooperative Extension Service