

Insurance Tips

There are many things homeowners might not know about insurance that can make a big difference when filing a claim during a hurricane. Here are some answers to common questions:

- Do homeowners' insurance policies cover flooding? No. Homeowners need a separate flood-insurance policy to protect against flood damage.
- Do automobile insurance policies cover flooding? Yes, if the car owner has purchased comprehensive coverage. It is not, however, covered under liability coverage.
- Can I buy flood insurance if my property has flooded in the past? Yes. However, there might be a 30-day delay before flooding is covered.
- Will federal disaster assistance pay for flood damage? Some are eligible if in a federally declared disaster area.
- My neighbor's tree fell on my property and caused damage. Is the neighbor's homeowners' insurance company responsible? Generally, it is your insurance company's responsibility. Your neighbor's insurer would accept liability probably only if the tree were dead or weakened in such a way that the owner should have known it was dangerous before it fell.
- How soon does the insurance company have to pay for repairs to property? An insurance company has up to 30 days to pay a claim after being given proof of loss.
- If I am not satisfied with the service my insurance company has given me, how do I file a complaint with the Department of Insurance? All complaints should be submitted in writing to the Department of Insurance, attention Property and Casualty Consumer Complaints, P.O. Box 94214, Baton Rouge, LA, 70804. You can also call (800) 259-5300 or (225) 342-1258.

Here are some tips to consider in the event of filing a claim:

- Create an inventory of belongings with video, photos or a written list. Store in a fireproof safe or safe-deposit box. Consider purchasing extra coverage (known as "endorsements") for computers, jewelry, art and other expensive items.
- Talk to your insurance agent to make sure you have adequate coverage under your homeowner's insurance policy. Make sure your coverage is adequate to repair or rebuild in the current building market.
- Check your insurance policy for a windstorm or hurricane deductible. These are expressed either as a dollar amount or as a percentage of the insured value of the home – not as a percentage of the amount of the loss. Insurers offer a range of deductibles; the higher the deductible, the lower the premium will be.
- Consider buying flood insurance. A separate policy available from the National Flood Insurance Program covers flooding resulting from hurricanes.