



A CONSUMER'S GUIDE TO

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS



Mike Causey
Insurance Commissioner

We all want to remain safe and secure, but no one is ever completely safe from disasters like hurricanes, floods and fires. You need to know what to do in the event of a disaster and what steps to take before a disaster ever strikes to assure that loss will be minimized.

Your North Carolina Department of Insurance has designed this brochure to provide you with the information you need to financially protect you, your family and your property in the event of a disaster.

If you have any additional questions or need clarification on this or other insurance matters, you can call the Department's Consumer Services Division at 855-408-1212.

AVAILABLE INSURANCE COVERAGES



HOMEOWNERS

Property owners should consider whether to insure their property for the replacement cost or actual cash value. Replacement cost is the amount it would take to rebuild your home or repair damages with materials of similar kind and quality without deducting for depreciation.

Depreciation is the decrease in home or property value since the time it was built or purchased due to age or wear. Actual cash value is the amount it would take to repair damage to your home after depreciation.

Most standard homeowners policies cover the contents of your home on an actual cash value basis. Many insurers offer an option for you to insure your property at replacement cost. The premium may be slightly higher for this coverage, however, you may want to consider the option.

Make sure you have appropriate insurance to cover your needs and keep your insurance policies accessible and secure. It is also a good idea to take photographs of the contents of your dwellings to have a visual record of the personal property your policy covers.

RENTERS

Renters should consider purchasing coverage for their personal property through renters' insurance. Without it, in the event of a disaster, they could have no place to turn to recoup their losses. Renters' insurance covers only the contents of the rented shelter.

COLLEGE STUDENTS

College students can often purchase dorm room insurance as well. Before sending your son or daughter to college, check your homeowners policy to determine whether or not dormitory coverage is needed, as some family homeowners' policies will cover losses from dorm rooms, but not all do.

FLOOD INSURANCE

Residents of many flood prone areas are eligible for special flood protection provided by the federal government under the Flood Insurance Program.

To find out if your property is eligible for this insurance, call your county government. Your agent can purchase this coverage for you if you are eligible or you may call 1-800-379-9531 (National Flood Insurance Program).

OUTER BANKS DWELLERS

Those who live or own property along the North Carolina Outer Banks may be eligible to purchase protection under the BEACH Plan. It offers coverage for fire, lightning, theft, wind, and hail.

Similar coverage can be purchased for those living anywhere but the Outer Banks under the FAIR Plan.

These two plans ensure that property owners can get insurance coverage. If you would like more information on these plans, call 1-800-662-7048 (The FAIR and BEACH Plans) or ask your insurance agent.



BEFORE AND AFTER THE STORM



BEFORE THE STORM

- Review your homeowner's policy with your agent. Standard homeowner's policies do not cover flood damage and, in some coastal areas, windstorm and hail coverage is also excluded from the standard policy.
- Some residents may qualify for flood insurance through the National Flood Insurance Program, 1-800-379-9531.
- Outer Banks property owners may be eligible to purchase protection under a program called the Beach Plan. The Plan offers coverage for fire, lightning, theft, wind and hail. For more information on the Beach Plan call 1-800-662-7048.
- Tenants should consider purchasing coverage for their personal property through renters insurance.
- Make a list of your belongings and record them on film through still photos or videotape. Include a close-up shot of the day's newspaper. Keep your inventory list along with purchase receipts, pictures and your insurance policy in a safe-deposit box or other safe place away from your home..

ARE YOU COVERED?

- Fire and Extended Coverage Policies, Homeowners Policies and Farmowners Policies cover fire and lightning, wind or hail, but NOT flood or rising water damage.
- Flood Policies cover flood and rising water damage only. They do not cover fire, lightning, wind or hail damage.
- Mobile Homeowners Policies cover fire, lightning, wind, hail, flood or rising water.

AFTER THE STORM

- Contact your insurance agent as quickly as possible and ask for instructions on what to do until your adjuster arrives. Be sure to follow the company's instructions when making your claim. Insurance companies are required to handle claims promptly and fairly.
- Begin preparing an inventory of personal property damaged or destroyed and take pictures of the damaged property.
- Protect your property from further damage. Your reasonable expenses to protect your property are part of the loss and will be reimbursed by your insurance company. **KEEP YOUR RECEIPTS!**
- Do not have permanent repairs made until your insurance company has inspected the property and you have reached an agreement on the cost of repairs. The company has a legal right to inspect the property in its damaged condition and may refuse to pay you for any damage repaired before it has been inspected. Don't throw anything away before inspection by the company.
- If necessary, rent temporary shelter. If your home is uninhabitable because of physical damage, most homeowners' policies will pay additional living expenses while your property is being repaired. Lack of power or water is not considered physical damage and, therefore, additional living expenses will not be covered. Before renting temporary shelter, check with your insurance company or agent to determine what expenses will be reimbursed. **KEEP YOUR RECEIPTS.**
- When your insurance company representative arrives, be courteous. Don't take your frustrations out on your adjuster. He or she is there to help you and more progress can be made if you start off on the right foot.
- If you think that the estimate of the insurance company is too low, you may wish to obtain an estimate from your own contractor. A contractor may charge a fee for this service; but usually if he or she does the repair work, the fee will be credited to your bill.
- If you have questions or problems concerning your insurance coverage, contact the Consumer Services Division of the NC Department of Insurance toll-free at 855-408-1212.

ABOUT YOUR COVERAGE



Damage to your home from fallen trees is covered under most homeowners' policies. Most companies will pay to have trees removed from the damaged structure, such as your home, garage or fence, but will not pay to remove the tree from your yard.

Most homeowners' policies cover damages to appliances that result from a power surge when power is restored to your home. Some electronic components may not be covered.

Most homeowners' policies cover food which spoils due to power loss only if the individual feeder line to your home is down, not instances of widespread power failure. However, you can be covered in the event of widespread power failure if you purchased a "Refrigerated Property Coverage" endorsement. This endorsement allows up to \$500 in coverage, with a \$100 deductible.

Storm-related injuries to others on your property are covered by most homeowners' policies under your medical payments coverages.

Damage to your parked vehicle from a fallen tree is covered under your comprehensive automobile insurance.

Most insurance companies will hold drivers at fault for automobile accidents that occur as a result of weather conditions. This may result in the assignment of insurance points.

IMPORTANT CONTACTS

The following are phone numbers and additional contact information which may be useful in the event of an emergency:

OTHER STATE AGENCIES

Attorney General (Consumer Protection)
919-716-6000 or 1-877-566-7226

Legal Aid of NC
919-856-2564

NC Department of Agriculture
919-733-7125

NC Joint Underwriting Association / NC Insurance Underwriting Association
(Beach Plan/FAIR Plan)
1-800-662-7048

FEDERAL AGENCIES

Federal Emergency Management Agency
1-800-621-3362

Speech/Hearing Impaired Line
1-800-462-7585

National Flood Insurance Program
1-800-379-9531

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS

The Consumer Services Division of the Department of Insurance is here to help.

855-408-1212 Toll free
919-807-6750 Outside of North Carolina
919-733-0085 Fax

You can find additional information as well as a downloadable copy of our Request for Assistance form on our Web site at www.ncdoi.com.

North Carolina Department of Insurance
1201 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-1201
855-408-1212 • www.ncdoi.com

IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT **PUBLIC ADJUSTERS**

Rather than representing the insurance company, a “public adjuster” offers his/her services to the consumer for a fee. North Carolinians are also advised to be on alert for unlicensed public insurance adjusters who may try to do business illegally in our state. If you are approached by a public adjuster, ask to see a registration number and a letter from the NC Department of Insurance authorizing them to do business in North Carolina.

Do not do business with adjusters who request money from you in advance.

If you wish to report such illegal actions or want to confirm that a public adjuster is licensed, please call the Agent Services Division of the Department of Insurance at 919-807-6800.