

PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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What Consumers Should Know When Faced with a Storm Loss

August 26, 2011 - Concord, NH *Hurricane Irene is racing up the east coast and leaving a string of damage. At these times, it is critical to be prepared with the information your insurance adjuster will need to quickly process your claim if you suffer a loss.*

NH Insurance Commissioner Roger Sevigny said “We stand ready to assist New Hampshire residents affected by storm damage from Hurricane Irene with information, assistance and referral services. We hope the public will think of us when looking for information on what to do after suffering a property loss. We will do whatever we can to help find the right resources and information to assist New Hampshire residents to recover from this natural disaster.”

The New Hampshire Insurance Department offers these tips:

Auto and Homeowners Claims

Take photographs/video of the damage. Make the repairs necessary to prevent further damage to your property (cover broken windows, leaking roofs and damaged walls). Don't have permanent repairs made until your insurance company has inspected the property and you have reached an agreement on the cost of repairs. Save all receipts, including those from the temporary repairs covered by your insurance policy. Be prepared to provide the claims adjuster with records of any improvements you made prior to the damage.

Other Tips for Filing Auto or Homeowners Claims:

Don't make permanent repairs. An insurance company might deny a claim if you make permanent repairs before the damage is inspected.

If possible, determine what it will cost to repair your property before you meet with the claims adjuster.

Know Your Policy

Understand what your policy says. The policy is a contract between you and your insurance company. Know what's covered, what's excluded and what the deductibles are.

File Claims as Soon as Possible

Don't let the bills or receipts pile up. Call your agent or your company's claims hotline as soon as possible. Your policy might require that you make the notification within a certain time frame.

Provide Complete, Correct Information

Be certain to give your insurance company all the information they need. Incorrect or incomplete information will only cause a delay in processing your claim.

Keep Copies of all Correspondence

Whenever you communicate with your insurance company, be sure to keep copies and records of all correspondence. Write down information about your telephone and in-person contacts, including the date, name and title of the person you spoke with and what was said. Also, keep a record of your time and expenses.

Ask Questions

If there is a disagreement about the claim settlement, ask the company for the specific language in the policy that is in question. Find out if the disagreement is because you and the insurance company interpret your policy differently. If this disagreement results in a claim denial, make sure you obtain a written letter explaining the reason for the denial and the specific policy language under which the claim is being denied.

Don't Rush Into a Settlement

Ask the adjuster for an itemized explanation of the claim settlement offer. If the first offer made by an insurance company does not meet your expectations, be prepared to negotiate to get a fair settlement. If you have any questions regarding the fairness of your settlement, seek professional advice.

Making Repairs

Separate damaged and undamaged articles and do not throw away damaged property until an insurance adjuster has seen it, unless authorities require you to dispose of it.

Take photographs of damaged property, especially those things you must dispose of, like spoiled food or wet carpeting.

Be wary of contractors who demand up-front payment before work is initiated or payment in full before work is completed. If the contractor needs payment to buy supplies, consider going with the contractor and paying the supplier directly.

Get more than one bid. Ask for at least three references. Check with the Better Business Bureau or the Attorney General's Office about the contractor. Ask for proof of necessary licenses, building permits, insurance, and bonding. Record the license plate number and driver's license number of the contractor.

If you do not have flood insurance check all other policies for opportunities for reimbursement, like loss of food due to spoilage due to electrical outages, falling tree damage and similar losses that could be covered by auto, homeowner or other policies

Contact the New Hampshire Insurance Department

If you have a dispute with your insurer about the amount or terms of the claim settlement, contact the New Hampshire Insurance Department for assistance using this toll free number: 1-800-852-3416

For more information, go to the New Hampshire Insurance Department web site at www.nh.gov/insurance .

Before the Storm

It's never too late to get prepared. A home inventory can help make the claims process easier following a storm. For an inventory checklist and other disaster preparedness tips, visit the NH Insurance Department web site www.nh.gov/insurance .

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[The New Hampshire Insurance Department](http://www.nh.gov/insurance) The first insurance regulator in the US, the NH Insurance Department was created in 1851 and charged with enforcing and administering New Hampshire's insurance laws. The department, an agency of the executive branch of New Hampshire state government, conducts safety and soundness and market conduct examinations of licensees, licenses insurance companies and insurance producers, reviews premium rates and policy forms, provides assistance, information and referral services to New Hampshire insurance consumers, and administers the filing and collection of New Hampshire's insurance premium tax. For more information, visit the Insurance Department's web site at: www.nh.gov/insurance.