



South Carolina Department of Insurance

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Making the Claims Process Easier: What Consumers Should Know When Faced With A Loss

While weather related damage is beyond our control, we can take steps to ensure that the recovery process goes smoothly. “Many areas of the state have sustained heavy rains and wind over the past several days resulting in flash floods, downed trees, electrical and water outages and other damage. Please review the following information as you work to clean up and recover from the storm,” said Ray Farmer, Director of the South Carolina Department of Insurance.

Homeowners Insurance Coverage:

Property insurance generally covers loss or damage to your home, its contents (like your furniture, TV, clothes and jewelry) and detached buildings on your property (like a garage or tool shed). The extent of coverage will depend on the language of your policy. There may be a deductible with each property claim. A deductible is how much you agree to pay out of pocket for losses before your insurance company begins to pay. The deductible amount appears on the declarations page of your policy. The amount of coverage is based on the type of policy you purchase – actual cash or replacement cost.

If you have sustained weather related damage to your home and you have replacement cost coverage, your policy will generally cover the cost up to the value stated in the policy to return your home to the condition it was prior to the storm. Actual cash value means payment is limited to the depreciated value of each item at the time it is damaged, destroyed or stolen. Depreciation is the decrease in home or property value due to age or wear and tear since the time the home was built or purchased.

Downed Trees:

Generally, some homeowner’s insurance policies will provide up to \$500 coverage for tree removal. This limit applies to *ALL* of the downed trees per loss and is not paid on a per tree basis.

If a tree falls on your home or other structure covered under the terms of your homeowner’s policy, your insurance policy should cover the cost of removing the tree from the damaged structure. This would be paid under the dwelling portion of your policy.

Spoiled Food Due to an Electrical Outage:

If you lose electricity and the food in your refrigerator spoils, you may or may not be covered for the value of the spoiled food. Please review your policy as the language will outline the exclusions and terms.

Damage Due to Wind driven Rain:

Coverage depends upon the language of the policy. Damage due to wind driven rain may be covered by some policies. For example, if wind blows a hole in the structure and rain comes into the home and causes damage, depending on policy language, the damage may be covered. Contact your agent for more information and assistance as some policies may not provide coverage.

Flood Insurance Coverage:

The standard homeowners insurance policy does **NOT** include coverage for flood damage. You will need to purchase a separate flood insurance policy to protect your home from damages due to flood. The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) offers flood insurance coverage. Please be aware that there is a thirty-day waiting period for coverage to become effective. While coverage purchased now will not assist with recovery from this storm, please visit the NFIP at www.floodsmart.gov or call 1-888-379-9531 for information about this important coverage. You may also contact your insurance agent for information about purchasing a flood insurance policy for future events. A flood is defined as a general and temporary condition of partial or complete inundation of two or more properties from overflow of inland or tidal waters, from unusual and rapid accumulation or runoff of surface waters from any sources or mudflow.

Water Seepage:

If water seeps into your basement or home from the ground, you are generally **NOT** covered for the resulting damage. Water seepage is excluded under most homeowner's insurance policies. If the water seepage is not the result of a flood, you will not have coverage under your flood policy either. Problems from seepage are often considered maintenance issues and are not covered by insurance.

Automobile Insurance Coverage:

If your car sustained damage as a result of the storm and your automobile insurance policy includes comprehensive coverage then your car may be covered unless its terms provide otherwise. However, if you did not purchase comprehensive coverage and only purchased for example, liability coverage, the damage will not be covered by your policy.

Next Steps Once You Have A Loss:

- Document your entire loss with photographs, videos, etc.
- Mitigate the damages. You will need to take the necessary steps to prevent further damage and loss. Make temporary repairs using plywood, tarps etc. to protect the structure.
- Contact your insurance agent or company and report all claims as soon as possible.
- Keep a log of your personal property loss and gather all receipts for those items that have been damaged or destroyed. Photographs and videos of the materials will also help in filing the claim. Create an inventory of your furnishings and valuables. Keep a copy of the list and photo records in a safe deposit box or somewhere else safe away from your home. To download a free app to help you with your inventory, go to the iTunes® or Android® Market app stores and search "NAIC." For those without a smart phone, please visit the South Carolina Department of Insurance website, www.doi.sc.gov to find a link to a printable form.

The South Carolina Department of Insurance Office of Consumer Services' specially trained staff is available to assist consumers with their insurance-related questions and concerns. You may contact the Office of Consumer Services by calling our toll-free number, 1-800-768-3467 Mon. - Thurs. 8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. or Friday 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. You may also contact an analyst on line at consumers@doi.sc.gov. Due to the storm, we anticipate a higher call volume at this time. We appreciate your patience and please know that we will assist you as quickly as possible. For additional insurance information please visit our website, www.doi.sc.gov.

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