

10 CATASTROPHE CLAIM TIPS FOR SEVERE WEATHER SEASON



If your property is damaged by a hurricane, tornado, hailstorm or similar disaster, we recommend considering the following tips to achieve fast, efficient handling of your claim.

1. Assess the damage to the best of your ability and be prepared to give an accurate description of the amount and type of damage. Make sure you state whether the premises were rendered inhabitable as a result of the damages. This will allow your company to send out an adjuster with the appropriate level of experience, based on the level of damage.
2. Notify your insurance carrier or agent **as soon as possible**. The insurance contract requires notification as soon as possible after a loss. Be sure to leave a telephone number where you can be contacted and a complete address of the location so the company can get an adjuster to the scene quickly. Be sure to stay in touch with your adjuster and respond to calls promptly. Catastrophes can generate hundreds of claims, so communication and cooperation is vital for a quick resolution to your claim.
3. Take the necessary steps to avoid or minimize the suspension of business. Costs incurred that reduce your business interruption loss may be covered under Extra Expense. Be familiar with your policy coverage before you suffer a loss.
4. Make whatever temporary repairs are necessary to prevent further damage, theft, or vandalism. Repairs of this kind could include boarding up broken windows and covering holes in the roof. Mitigating your damage is usually a condition of coverage, and is good advice regardless (your insurance will usually cover the reasonable cost of temporary repairs). **DO NOT make permanent repairs to your damaged property unless the adjuster has reviewed your claim and given you permission to restore your property.**
5. Photograph damaged areas prior to making temporary repairs if possible. Doing so will strengthen your claim and help with the presentation of your loss.
6. If you can, get one or two detailed estimates for permanent repairs from a reliable contractor and give these estimates to the adjuster. Beware of "fly-by-night" operators who often follow a storm into town. Check with the Better Business Bureau before doing business with any vendor you don't know. Keep in mind that public adjusters are illegal in some states. We recommend knowing the reputable contractors and restoration companies in your area, who you prefer to use, **before** you suffer a loss.
7. Refrain from signing any contract for restoration or repairs prior to discussing it with your company adjuster. Your adjuster can play a key role in helping you avoid price gouging after a catastrophe, but he/she won't be able to negotiate a reasonable price for services if you've already signed a contract. Remember your insurance company is NOT bound by the contracts you sign.
8. Prepare an inventory of all damaged or destroyed property for the adjuster. Be sure to keep a copy for your records, and be sure NOT to discard ANY items before the adjuster is given a reasonable amount of time to inspect them. Provide available cancelled checks, invoices, etc. that support the value of damaged or destroyed property.
9. Keep ALL receipts and invoices for EVERY expense you incur after the loss, including items such as tarps, boards, cleaning supplies, etc. These costs add up quickly and may help erode your deductible.
10. It is always a good idea to read through your policy and review coverage and exclusions prior to a claim so you will know what to expect. Keep an updated inventory of all of your property. Seemingly insignificant items can add up quickly and should be submitted for review and consideration.

CONTACT

To learn more about how AmWINS can help you place coverage for your clients, reach out to your local AmWINS broker or marketing@amwins.com.

Legal Disclaimer: Views expressed here do not constitute legal advice. The information contained herein is for general guidance of matter only and not for the purpose of providing legal advice. Discussion of insurance policy language is descriptive only. Every policy has different policy language. Coverage afforded under any insurance policy issued is subject to individual policy terms and conditions. Please refer to your policy for the actual language.

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WARNING

Unlicensed or unscrupulous persons may pose as adjusters or, being an adjuster, may pose a threat to consumers. Public adjusters, in particular, may pose a problem since they don't work for any company or company-adjusting firm. Unlicensed public adjusters have not demonstrated their competency to adjust claims nor have they posted the required surety bond. You are encouraged to report any such activity to local authorities. Please caution any clients that, if they contract with a public adjuster, they are authorizing the claim check to be made payable to both themselves or a mortgagee and the adjuster.

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