

# Protect Yourself with Flood Insurance (Preparation and Recovery)

## Preparation and Recovery: Overview

### Emergency Preparation

Being prepared for a flood can not only help keep your family safe, it can also help minimize potential flood damage and accelerate recovery efforts.

Along with flood insurance, you can also protect yourself by safeguarding your home and possessions, developing a family emergency plan, and understanding your policy.

Learn how to deal with a flood, both before and after it happens, right now.

### Before A Flood

#### Educate Yourself

After getting flood insurance, there are several things you can do to minimize losses in your home and ensure your family's safety.

#### 1. Safeguard your possessions.

Create a personal "flood file" containing information about all your possessions and keep it in a secure place, such as a safe deposit box or waterproof container. This file should have:

- A copy of your insurance policies with your agent's contact information.
- A room-by-room inventory of your possessions, including receipts, photos, and videos.
- Copies of all other critical documents, including finance records or receipts of major purchases.

#### 2. Prepare your house.

- First make sure your sump pump is working and then install a battery-operated backup, in case of a power failure. Installing a water alarm will also let you know if water is accumulating in your basement.
- Clear debris from gutters and downspouts.
- Anchor any fuel tanks.
- Raise your electrical components (switches, sockets, circuit breakers, and wiring) at least 12 inches above your home's projected flood elevation.
- Place the furnace, water heater, washer, and dryer on cement blocks at least 12 inches above the projected flood elevation.
- Move furniture, valuables, and important documents to a safe place.

#### 3. Develop a family emergency plan.

- Create a safety kit with drinking water, canned food, first aid, blankets, a radio, and a flashlight.

- Post emergency telephone numbers by the phone and teach your children how to dial 911.
- Plan and practice a flood evacuation route with your family. Know safe routes from home, work, and school that are on higher ground.
- Ask an out-of-state relative or friend to be your emergency family contact.

Have a plan to protect your pets.

For more information on emergency preparation, talk to your insurance agent or visit [Ready.gov](http://Ready.gov).

### During A Flood

#### Protect Yourself and Your Home

- Here's what you can do to stay safe during a flood: If flooding occurs, go to higher ground and avoid areas subject to flooding.
- Do not attempt to walk across flowing streams or drive through flooded roadways.
- If water rises in your home before you evacuate, go to the top floor, attic, or roof.
- Listen to a battery-operated radio for the latest storm information.
- Turn off all utilities at the main power switch and close the main gas valve if advised to do so.
- If you've come in contact with floodwaters, wash your hands with soap and disinfected water.

### After A Flood

#### The Road to Recovery

As soon as floodwater levels have dropped, it's time to start the recovery process. Here's what you can do to begin restoring your home.

- If your home has suffered damage, call your insurance agent to file a claim.
- Check for structural damage before re-entering your home to avoid being trapped in a building collapse.
- Take photos of any floodwater in your home and save any damaged personal property.
- Make a list of damaged or lost items and include their purchase date and value with receipts. Some damaged items may require disposal, so keep photographs of these items.
- Keep power off until an electrician has inspected your system for safety.
- Boil water for drinking and food preparation until authorities tell you that your water supply is safe.

- Prevent mold by removing wet contents immediately.
- Wear gloves and boots to clean and disinfect. Wet items should be cleaned with a pine-oil cleanser and bleach, completely dried, and monitored for several days for any fungal growth and odors.

### File Your Claim

#### Dealing with the Aftermath

You'll be able to file your flood insurance claim by following these three steps:

#### STEP ONE:

After experiencing a flood, contact your agent or insurance company to file a claim. An adjuster should contact you within a few days of filing your claim. If you do not hear from an adjuster, you can contact your insurance agent or company again. Make sure you have the following information handy:

- The name of your insurance company
- Your policy number
- A telephone and/or email address where you can be reached at all times

#### STEP TWO:

Separate damaged from undamaged property. Your adjuster will need evidence of the damage to your home and possessions to prepare your repair estimate.

- Take photographs of all of the damaged property, including discarded objects, structural damage, and standing floodwater levels.
- Make a list of damaged or lost items and include their date of purchase, value, and receipts, if possible.
- Officials may require disposal of damaged items so, if possible, place flooded items outside of the home.

#### STEP THREE:

Your adjuster will provide you a Proof of Loss form - your official claim for damages. You'll need to file this claim with your insurance company within 60 days of the flood. This document substantiates the insurance claim and is required before the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) or insurance company can make payment.

You'll receive your claim payment after you and the insurer agree on the amount of damages and the

insurer has your complete, accurate, and signed Proof of Loss form. If major catastrophic flooding occurs, it may take longer to process claims and make payments because of the sheer number of claims submitted.

### **Time to Get Covered**

When you're ready to buy flood insurance, talk to your agent. Together, you can discuss how best to meet your insurance needs.

### **NFIP Tips for Filing Your Flood Insurance Claim**

If your community has been flooded, and your property or home has suffered flood damage, here's how to file your flood insurance claim.

#### **Contact your agent or insurance company**

**Call your agent or insurance company as soon as possible** to begin the claims process. If possible, have the following information with you when you place your call: (1) the name of your insurance company; (2) your policy number; and (3) a telephone number/e-mail address where you can be reached.

**If you can't locate your policy information** or need help contacting your insurance company, call 1-800-427-4661 to talk to a National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) insurance specialist.

They can help you locate your insurance company and connect you directly to your insurance company claims specialist.

**When you file your claim, ask for an approximate time frame** for when an adjuster will be assigned. If you live in an area where catastrophic damages occurred please be patient, as some of these areas are inaccessible.

#### **Work with your adjuster**

**An adjuster will be in touch with you as soon as possible** and will work with you to calculate the value of the damage and prepare a repair estimate.

**Let your agent know if your contact information changes.** If you are in a shelter or cannot be easily reached, please provide the name of a relative or point-of-contact who can reach you.

**If you are unable to return home,** start by making a list of items and appliances in your home that may have been damaged. This will help your adjuster get an accurate picture of your potential loss.

**If you are able to return home,** the following steps will help with the adjustment process:

- Separate damaged and undamaged items. If you dispose of items, keep a swatch or sample for the adjuster.
- Take photos of any water in the house and damaged personal property.
- Make a list of damaged or lost items (include their age and value where possible) and provide any damage estimates by a contractor to your adjuster.

### **Important numbers for policyholders**

**Flood insurance questions?** Call 1-800-427-4661 for general flood insurance questions or to locate your flood insurance company or call 1-800-942-4242 for help locating your homeowners and flood insurance company.

**Need additional aid?** Call 1-800-621-3362 to register with FEMA Disaster Assistance. You may be eligible for additional FEMA and State assistance.

#### **Streamlined claims after Katrina and Rita**

**Advance payments.** Ask your company representative or adjuster about advance payments available to you. If you have contents coverage you may be eligible for an advance check in the range of \$3,000.

**Waived proof-of-loss.** The NFIP has waived the usual proof-of-loss requirement. Instead, where the policyholder agrees, the claim will be based upon the report by the claims adjuster.

**Fast-tracked payments for extensive loss.** Talk with your adjuster about how the damage assessment will be completed. In some cases, depending upon the extent of damage to your property, policy limits may be paid without waiting for a site visit. This process may be used when homes have been washed off their foundations, affected for long periods by standing water, or when only pilings or a slab remain.

**Easier listing of contents.** Your adjuster will assist you in developing a list of damaged contents and appliances. Serial and model numbers are not needed, and a list of contents by major grouping may be submitted.

# Protect Yourself with Flood Insurance

## Preparation and Recovery

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