



NEWS RELEASE

STATE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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State Insurance Department Offers Tips

Know Your Rights When Working With Insurance Companies

Lansing, Mich. – With northwest Michigan citizens and businesses still cleaning up after the Aug. 2 severe storms, the Michigan Department of Insurance and Financial Services (DIFS) is providing tips to consider when working with insurance companies to file a claim and repair damages.

“A disaster can be a life-changing and stressful situation for everyone involved,” said Patrick M. McPharlin, director of the DIFS. “When working with insurance companies, make sure you thoroughly document your damages and know your coverage rights.”

Disaster survivors are encouraged to do the following after a disaster:

- Contact your insurance agent or your insurance company's toll-free claims number as soon as possible. Keep a record of the time, date, topic and name of the person you talk to every time you call.
- As a policyholder, you have the obligation to make temporary repairs as needed to prevent further damage. For example, a hole in the roof should be covered by a tarp or other material to keep water or other weather elements out. Further damage may not be covered by insurance if temporary repairs are not completed. Keep receipts for materials you buy so you can be reimbursed. **Do not make permanent repairs until your insurance company has inspected the damage.** If you do, your claim might be denied.
- Take pictures, if possible, of the damage.
- Start making a list of all personal property destroyed or damaged. Note the approximate date, price, and place of purchase and attach any sales receipts you have. The adjuster will request this information. In addition, the insurance company may want to inspect the damaged items, so do not throw anything away.

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- Ask your insurance agent or company if your policy covers living expenses until repairs are made to your home. Many homeowners policies provide for temporary lodging and meal expenses up to 20 percent of the insured value of your home.
- If you own a business ask about business interruption coverage, which will help cover a loss of income a business may suffer while the damages are being repaired.
- Your insurance company may have a preferred contractor or repair facility list. You are not obligated to use their suggestion, and have the right to choose whomever you feel comfortable using.
- Check your policy for debris removal. Many policies do include the removal of storm-related debris, like brush, limbs and logs.
- A "public adjuster," or a person licensed by the state, may offer to represent you in claim negotiations with your insurer. Public adjusters will seek part of your settlement as payment for their services; however, their fee cannot exceed 10 percent of the loss settlement amount. You are not required to hire a public adjuster to file a claim.

Anyone with questions or concerns about their insurance coverage is asked to call the DIFS toll-free hotline at 1-877-999-6442.

About the DIFS

The DIFS licenses insurance companies, agents and public adjusters who do business in Michigan. The department can help answer questions regarding what an insurer must do and help explain policy language.

If you believe your insurance company has not handled your claim properly, file a complaint with the DIFS. They will determine whether your insurance company has followed the Michigan Insurance Code and your policy language in their processing of your claim.

For more information, visit ["How to File a Complaint"](#) on the [DIFS website](#).

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The SEOC is the emergency operations center for the state of Michigan. Located in Lansing, the SEOC is overseen by the Michigan State Police, Emergency Management and Homeland Security Division and coordinates response and recovery efforts by state agencies and local government. The SEOC is staffed by members of state agencies for decision making and information coordination during disasters or emergencies in the state of Michigan.

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