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Dear Consumer:

This useful packet of insurance-related information is designed to help you determine what you should do in case of a disaster. Included in this packet, you will find financial information for disaster victims, tips on filing a claim and advice on how to work with contractors during the rebuilding phase.

As Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Commerce, it's important to me that residents have the information they need to make informed decisions. If you have a question or concerns about your homeowners or flood insurance, please contact the Department's Consumer Response Team at 651-296-2488, or toll free 800-657-3602.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mike Rothman".

Mike Rothman  
COMMISSIONER

## BAD WEATHER: EVERYONE IS AT RISK

Natural disasters happen. Minnesotans have their share. You never know when you could suffer property damage or loss from a flood, tornado, wind, hailstorm, or fire

### IF YOU EXPERIENCE A LOSS...

If you have experienced weather damage to your home or property, take the following steps:

1. **Get the claims process in motion.** Contact your insurance company immediately to report your loss. Follow the instructions given to you by claims personnel. Since there may be a lot of people needing help at the same time, anything you have done before the disaster to prepare for a loss will be to your benefit now.
2. **Keep your insurance policy number handy.** The claims process always goes faster when the adjuster, the agent, or the service center operator does not have to search their records for information about your policy.
3. **Keep your claim number handy.** When you file your claim, the insurer will give it a number. Future conversations with insurance personnel will go quicker if you know your claim number.
4. **Take notes.** Start from the beginning and keep a log of the people you spoke to and when. Summarize your conversation. Ask questions if you do not understand instructions. If possible, take photographs or video of the inside and outside of the premises, showing the damage and surrounding area.
5. **Make a List.** No one can remember everything that may have been lost during a catastrophic disaster like a tornado, but it is a good idea to begin making a list of as many things as you can remember. Do not forget to list seasonal items that you may not be thinking of at the present time such as holiday decorations, etc.
6. **Figure out the extent of the damage.** Separate the damaged from the undamaged property and put it in the best possible order for the adjuster's examination. If possible, protect the property from further damage.
7. **Wait for the company's adjuster to arrive.** Do not call anyone to repair or replace your loss without first getting instructions from your company's adjuster. Your insurer's visual inspection of your loss may be necessary before repairs are undertaken. Do not throw away damaged property until your company's adjuster advises you it is all right to do so. If your home is damaged, make only temporary repairs until a claims adjuster looks at the damage. Making permanent repairs before the adjuster's inspection could trigger a denial of your claim.
8. **Adjuster Inspection.** A company adjuster will do an inspection of your home to assess the initial damage. Be sure to ask the adjuster for proper identification and for a business card identifying his/her phone number and address. Also be sure to ask what you are required to do next and what the company will be doing next. It is a good idea to ask if you are expected to get estimates for repairs or if the company will be doing that on your behalf. Finally, ask how long the adjuster expects the claim settlement process to last.
9. **Additional Living Expenses.** If you are unable to occupy your home, the adjuster may issue an advance payment for additional living expenses. You may cash the check without in any way compromising your claim or agreeing to a final settlement. However, you should keep receipts for all additional expenses you incur because your home is uninhabitable.

- 10. Choosing a Contractor:** You are free to choose the contractor of your choice to perform the repairs on our house. However, it is important to keep in mind that the insurance company's only obligation to you is to return the home to its pre-loss condition. Therefore, if the insurer's contractor will complete the work for less than your contractor, you may end up being responsible for the difference. In addition, it is good to remember that the insurer is responsible for their contractor's work. If you hire your own contractor and that person fails to complete the job or does substandard work your only recourse is dealing directly with the contractor.

If you decide to collect your own estimates for the costs of repairing your dwelling, be sure that the contractor is licensed by the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry. You can check a contractor's licensing status by calling (651) 284-5065. If you hire a licensed contractor and he/she takes your money without completing the job, there is a Contractor's Recovery Fund that will help to reimburse you. If you are dealing with an unlicensed contractor and they steal your funds, your only recourse to get your money back would be to try and sue the contractor.

- 11. Actual Cash Value vs. Replacement Cost:** Once you and the company have agreed on the amount and the value of the loss, the company will issue a check for the actual cash value of the item that needs to be replaced. Actual cash value is equal to the purchase price minus the amount of depreciation, based on the age and condition of the item at the time of loss.

If you have replacement coverage, the insurance company will give you another check for the full replacement cost of the lost or damaged item as soon as you provide them with proof that it has been replaced and the cost of replacement.

- 12. File Claims as Soon as Possible.** Don't let the bills or receipts pile up. It is important to note that most policies have provisions that limit an insured's entitlement to replacement cost benefits to those situations where the repairs or replacement has been completed within 6 months of the date of loss. If you are unable to complete repairs or replace lost items within this time period, you should write to the company and ask for an extension of this time limit.

## **For More Information about Insurance**

Minnesota Department of Commerce

800-657-3602 or 651-296-2488

[www.insurance.mn.gov](http://www.insurance.mn.gov)

## **For More Information about Contractors**

Minnesota Department of Labor & Industry

651-284-5065

## **STORM DAMAGE TO AUTOMOBILES**

Storms can damage autos in a number of ways:

- Hail damage to the exterior and glass
- Flood damage to the engine and interior areas
- Wind driven debris damage
- Damage from fallen trees
- Tornadoic damage

Coverage for these types of losses is provided by your policy under the "Comprehensive" portion of the auto policy. Some policies call this coverage "Other than Collision".

### **HOW TO FILE AND SETTLE A CLAIM**

- Call your agent or the claims processing center listed on your "Minnesota Insurance Identification Card."
- Document the damage with photos
- Obtain estimates from repair facilities – Your insurance company may want more than one estimate including one from their preferred facility or claims center.

### **REPAIRING YOUR VEHICLE**

If the repair estimates are less than the value of the auto, the insurer will likely proceed to pay for the repairs.

- Generally repair of the auto is made by using parts of the same year and manufacturer as the damaged auto (used parts). You can not be required to accept "after market parts".
- You may choose your own repair facility. However, if that facility is not the low estimate, you may be responsible for paying the difference.
- If the windshield and windows are damaged, original equipment glass is not required to affect replacement.
- Hail damage can be repaired using the dent-less paint repair procedure. If the procedure does not repair the damage, replacement of the damaged parts would be required.
- Can I ask for cash in lieu of repair? Yes, if you don't have a lienholder. However, the insurance company may subtract the profit/overhead that is in the bid of the repair facility. (You can't profit from a claim).

### **DETERMINING THE MARKET VALUE OF THE TOTALED AUTO**

If the estimate of repair is close to the market value of your auto, the insurance company will begin to consider declaring it a total loss.

Minnesota law requires the insurance company to pay "the cost of a comparable auto, adjusted for mileage, condition and options in the local market place of the insured" (with all applicable taxes and license fees). Usually this is determined by checking internet sources such as CarSoup.com, cars.com, AutoTrader.com and the local newspaper. The insurance company can obtain a market survey of recent sales of comparable autos from a vendor.

If you disagree with your insurance company over the market value of your totaled auto, you can request the "appraisal process". Each party hires their own appraiser. If they can't agree, the jointly hire an umpire to make the decision. You pay for your appraiser and ½ of the umpire fee.

**For More Information about Insurance**

Minnesota Department of Commerce

800-657-3602 or 651-296-2488

[www.insurance.mn.gov](http://www.insurance.mn.gov)

## **IF IT'S TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE, IT PROBABLY IS!**

Unfortunately, disasters bring out the worst in some people. You are at your most vulnerable when disaster strikes, so be wary of people who try to cash in on your misery. You always must be on your guard for **home repair con artists**, who overcharge, perform shoddy work and often leave without finishing the job. What can you do to find a quality contractor in the wake of a weather-related disaster? Consider these tips:

- Watch out for fly-by-night operators. Be wary of builders or contractors who go door-to-door selling their services, especially those who are not known in your community. These individuals may offer dramatically reduced prices because they've supposedly just completed work nearby and claim to have materials left over.
- Make sure you are working with a credible firm.
- Deal only with licensed and insured contractors.
- Investigate the track record of any roofer, builder or contractor you're thinking of hiring.
- Ask friends, relatives, neighbors, co-workers, insurance agents or claims adjusters for recommendations.
- Consult your Better Business Bureau to see if there are any complaints on file about the individual or company in question.
- Don't let a smooth-talking con artist talk you into participating in a scheme to submit a phony insurance claim. You may be tempted by the promise of making some quick money, but you probably would be judged every bit as guilty as the contractor.
- Remember that a fast-buck attempt to rip-off your insurance company is one way that a weather disaster can be made into something even worse.
- Insurance fraud is a felony crime carrying stiff penalties for those convicted.

### **For More Information about Insurance**

Minnesota Department of Commerce

800-657-3602 or 651-296-2488

[www.insurance.mn.gov](http://www.insurance.mn.gov)

### **For More Information about Contractors**

Minnesota Department of Labor & Industry

651-284-5065

## IF YOUR WEATHER RELATED CLAIM IS DENIED . . .

After almost every major storm, some consumers feel that the insurance company improperly rejected their claims or unduly delayed payment of settlements. If you think your claim is being denied unfairly, follow these procedures:

1. **Review the terms of your policy.** Insurance policies are very specific and should indicate the specific perils covered. Be aware that even if fully insured for all perils, some losses will not be covered:
  - Cost of tree and debris removal when structures unharmed
  - Undamaged property, siding or shingles
  - Damage to property not involving structures
2. **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.
3. **Appeal to your agent or the insurance company's claims manager.** Explain your side of the matter. Provide copies of supporting documents. Also, send a letter and documents to the claims executive at the insurance company's headquarters whose address is usually found on the first page of the policy. Ask the company for a second inspection by a different adjuster.
4. **Don't Rush into a Settlement.** 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.
5. **Appraisal Process.** Most policies have a clause that allows you to ask for an appraisal of the loss. You will be able to select an appraiser, the insurance company will select one, and a third will be mutually agreed upon. Together they will appraise the loss and decide on a value. Your policy will have more details on this procedure.

### For More Information

Minnesota Department of Commerce

800-657-3602 or 651-296-2488

[www.insurance.mn.gov](http://www.insurance.mn.gov)

## After the storm is over: working with contractors. *Tips from the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry*

### Do your homework before work begins on your home

The Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) reminds homeowners to do some homework before hiring a building contractor after a storm ... or anytime.

Before hiring a contractor, visit [www.doli.state.mn.us/contractor.html](http://www.doli.state.mn.us/contractor.html) or call the Department of Labor and Industry to verify the contractor is licensed and to learn if there is a history of disciplinary action. And do not to sign anything presented by a contractor unless you read the document very carefully and have made a firm decision to hire that contractor. Generally speaking, if you sign a piece of paper, it is a contract, regardless of what the salesperson tells you, and you are then obligated to its terms.

In some cases, a salesperson for the contractor will explain the company will work with the homeowner's insurance carrier to get a good settlement and that the homeowner will not have to pay any more than the amount of their deductible. The salesperson will then ask the homeowner to sign an "authorization" form to allow the salesperson to contact the insurer. Many of the forms state that by signing, the homeowner agrees to have the contractor perform the work allowed by the insurance company in exchange for the insurance claim proceeds.

The homeowner may be left with the mistaken impression that they are still free to pursue bids from other contractors, even after signing the document. However, some of these contract forms contain small print (usually on the back of the document) that says if the homeowner cancels the contract after three business days, the homeowner will owe the contractor a percentage (usually from 15 to 50 percent) of the total claim settlement. This becomes a problem when the homeowner finds another contractor that they prefer to the original contractor.

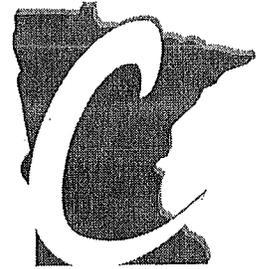
DLI licenses residential builders, remodelers, roofers and manufactured home installers. To work in Minnesota, these professionals must be licensed. If you hire an unlicensed contractor, you will not have access to the Contractor's Recovery Fund, which is available to compensate consumers who have suffered losses due to a contractor's fraudulent, deceptive or dishonest practices.

### Before you hire a contractor, DLI suggests homeowners ask:

- for the contractor's license number, then contact the Construction Codes and Licensing's Enforcement Services unit at DLI to verify the builder is currently licensed and to determine if the contractor has a disciplinary history;
- the contractor how long and where they have been in business;
- for references and check with former customers to see if they were satisfied with the work;
- for a Minnesota business address other than a post office box; and
- for a local phone number where the contractor can be reached during normal business hours.

### Avoid contractors that:

- arrive in an unmarked truck or van;
- ask you to sign an "estimate" or "authorization" before you have decided to actually hire them;
- appear to be willing to do the job at an unusually low price;
- only provide a post office box for their business address;
- require full or substantial payment before work begins;
- refuse to provide you with a written estimate or contract;
- refuse to provide you with a state of Minnesota license number;
- refuse to provide you with references;
- show up at your door unsolicited; or
- use high-pressure sales tactics.



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## **Before you sign a contract, make sure it includes:**

- a detailed summary of the work to be done;
- a description of materials to be used;
- the total contract price or how the price will be calculated; and
- specific timelines and provisions that address what will happen if the contractor fails to meet the contractual deadlines.

## **What is the Contractor's Recovery Fund?**

The purpose of the Contractor's Recovery Fund is to compensate consumers who have suffered losses due to a licensed contractor's fraudulent, deceptive or dishonest practices, conversion of funds or failure to perform. All licensed contractors are required to pay a fee to the fund.

The total amount that can be paid out against any one licensed contractor is \$75,000. If multiple claims are filed against the same contractor they are prorated. In these situations, you may not be able to recover your entire loss. To better protect yourself, you may wish to request that your contractor obtain a performance bond for your specific project in case the contractor does not perform. A performance bond would provide a specific level of protection for your specific project.

## **If you have a problem or complaint with a residential building contractor**

Contact the Construction Codes and Licensing's Enforcement Services unit at (651) 284-5069 to discuss your situation with an investigator who may offer suggestions about how to resolve the dispute. If the dispute cannot be resolved, you may submit a written request for a formal investigation.

Contact the Construction Codes and Licensing's Enforcement Services unit at:

Phone: (651) 284-5069

Fax: (651) 284-5749

E-mail: [DLL.Contractor@state.mn.us](mailto:DLL.Contractor@state.mn.us)

February 2010

# After the storm is over, disaster recovery for Minnesotans

## Frequently asked Questions

### *Q: I've settled with the insurance company, now what?*

Once the dust settles or the water recedes and everyone is safe, homeowners affected by a disaster should immediately call their insurance company and their mortgage servicer - they will be your partners in rebuilding your home.

As soon as the insurance process is underway, you should immediately contact the customer service center or claims center for your mortgage servicer. With the experience of hurricanes Rita and Katrina, most mortgage service companies now have a packet of information ready with instructions on what to do with your insurance settlement check and how to manage the repair and reconstruction of your home.

### *Q: Why is my insurance settlement check written out to my mortgage servicer?*

Assuming you have a mortgage on your home, the insurance settlement check will likely be written to both you and the holder of your mortgage (a bank or mortgage service company). This is because the lienholder has a right under the Uniform Commercial Code to protect its collateral and to make sure the insurance money is used to actually repair the property (remember, the house is the collateral for the loan).

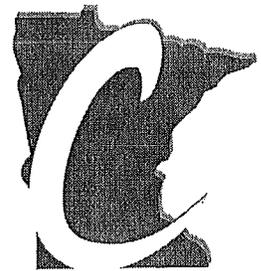
If your damage was relatively minor and your insurance settlement is less than \$10,000, the mortgage servicer will usually endorse the check and return it to you immediately.

If you sustained major damage or a total loss, the mortgage servicer will normally release one third of your settlement check immediately so you can make a down payment with your contractor. As the construction process continues, the mortgage servicer will typically release another third of the money when the construction is 50% completed and the final third upon completion of the entire project. Because the servicer is responsible to the holder of the mortgage to return your property to its original value, they may require an inspection of the construction work (which they will pay for) before releasing all of the funds.

### *Q: My contractor says I should have the insurance settlement check written only to me to speed up the rebuilding process?*

This is unnecessary and impractical because your mortgage servicer has the right, under the Uniform Commercial Code, to protect its collateral and to make sure the insurance money is used to restore the property to its original value. After the experience of hurricanes Rita and Katrina, most mortgage service companies now have a very fast turn around time and will work with your contractor to begin construction as soon as possible.

Most licensed contractors understand that the mortgage servicer will be included as a payee and most will work with their customers. To check if a contractor is licensed, visit [www.doli.state.mn.us/contractor.html](http://www.doli.state.mn.us/contractor.html) or call the Department of Labor and Industry at 800-342-5354



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***Q: Do I have to use the insurance settlement to pay off my current mortgage?***

No. Your mortgage service company will keep your insurance settlement money in escrow and release it to you in installments so you can repair or rebuild your home. You are not required to pay off your current mortgage and should continue making your normal monthly payments.

***Q: If my house is destroyed, am I still required to make mortgage payments?***

Even if your house is completely destroyed, the mortgage still exists. Most mortgage service companies will work with you to set up a payment plan, provide a grace period for late charges, and help in any way possible.

Contact your mortgage servicer, inform them of your situation, and ask them to explain what assistance they offer. You may be eligible for a grace period if:

You have evidence that your ability to make payments has been affected because your place of employment or ability to work was affected by a disaster.

You're the spouse of someone who died, is missing, or was injured in the disaster.

Your property has been damaged or destroyed and is within a federally declared disaster area.

During this grace period most mortgage servicers will waive late fees and stop any late payment collection activities. It's important you contact them to understand what assistance you are eligible for and the requirements for repaying any payments missed during the grace period.

**Call the Minnesota Department of Commerce With Questions**

For questions regarding insurance call the Minnesota Department of Commerce Consumer Response Team at 651-296-2488 or 800-657-3602 (outside Twin Cities metro area). You can also visit our insurance website at [www.insurance.mn.gov](http://www.insurance.mn.gov).

# Insurance Complaints

## When You Have a Dispute with an Insurer or Agent

If you are in a dispute with an insurance company or insurance agent in Minnesota and have been unable to resolve it to your satisfaction, the Minnesota Department of Commerce may be able to help.

*If you cannot reach an agreeable settlement*, you may wish to **complete a complaint form** to request help from our Consumer Response Team.

## Contact the Company or Agent Directly

If you disagree with your insurance company about a claim or have a question relating to a coverage issue, contact the company first.

- Speak with a management representative to try to find a solution.
- Explain the problem in a calm, courteous manner.
- Be accurate.
- Provide dates, amounts, and as many related facts as you can.
- If you still do not agree with the company position, ask them to provide a written response. Ask them to list the specific rules or language in the policy that allow them to deny or exclude coverage.

If you feel that your insurance agent misrepresented what your policy covers, made false statements to persuade your decision about coverage, or used other fraudulent methods, try to resolve the dispute by speaking directly with the agent.

If you still do not agree with the agent's position, ask for a written response. Ask the agent to include copies of documents you signed when you applied for insurance, or other reasons or facts, which might support the agent's actions.

## How the Minnesota Department of Commerce can help

If you are still dissatisfied after contacting the company or the agent, you may wish to contact our Market Assurance Division to ask questions or to file a complaint.

The Minnesota Department of Commerce Consumer Response Team (CRT) is comprised of investigators who respond to consumer phone calls specifically about insurance. The CRT attempts to resolve disputes between consumers and the insurance industry informally. In the Twin Cities metro area call (651) 296-2488 or statewide toll free at 800-657-3602.

When you file a written complaint, we will act as a link between you and the company or agent. We try to resolve the complaint and see that your questions are answered. Your complaint is based on the information and documents you submit. Be sure to include all pertinent information. Include:

- Name of the insurer and/or agent involved in the dispute.
- Policy and claim numbers.
- Details of any previous contact regarding the matter.
- Copies of documents that help verify or explain the problem.
- Your personal contact information (name, address, phone, email, etc.)

Always send copies. Please do not send original documents.

When we receive your complaint, we open a file and send you a notice that includes the file number we assigned to your case. Please provide this number when you contact our office about your complaint. We will contact the parties named in the complaint. We will ask them to review the matter and provide us with a written response. We will review the response to determine if it:

- Complies with the policy language.
- Complies with the Minnesota Insurance regulations and other rules or directives of the Commissioner.
- Addresses the issues in your complaint and is reasonable in light of approved and accepted business practice.

When our review is complete, we will provide you with a written statement of our position.

- *You may disagree with the results of our review.* If you have additional information that was not included with your original complaint, and feel it might alter the decision, you may submit the information to us for further review. Please be sure to include the file number assigned to your case.
- *We may not be able to provide the exact results you want.* We can only resolve disputes based on the information provided and our authority under Minnesota law.
- *Our authority is limited to companies and agents we license.* We cannot help resolve disputes with self-funded employee health benefit programs and union health and welfare plans. You may wish to contact the United States Department of Labor with questions about these types of entities. Their address and phone number and some other useful contacts are listed at the end of this page.
- *We have limited authority over third party liability claims.* We are unable to force insurers to pay claims. We also cannot help resolve disputes with entities or policies from other states. We cannot decide questions of fact, but we may be able to refer you to the appropriate authority to seek further help.

Our Consumer Response Team tries to resolve as many disputes as possible. We might need to contact you and the insurer or agent multiple times, depending on the case. While we strive to give prompt, quality service, a resolution may not occur immediately.

Thank you for your patience during the complaint process.

## **For More Information about Insurance**

**Minnesota Department of Commerce**  
**800-657-3602 or 651-296-2488**

**[www.insurance.mn.gov](http://www.insurance.mn.gov)**

## PUBLIC ADJUSTERS

The Department of Commerce licenses Public Insurance Adjusters who, for a fee, offer their services to insureds who may be entitled to benefits under an insurance policy. Public adjusters normally assist an insured in documenting losses and represent the insured in negotiations with the insurance company adjuster. Their fees are typically a percentage of the final insurance settlement.

Although public adjusters may be able to provide valuable services, insureds are not required to hire one in order to obtain policy benefits.

### Before you Hire a Public Adjuster...

1. **Check online** at [www.insurance.mn.gov](http://www.insurance.mn.gov) or call the Minnesota Department of Commerce at 1-800-657-3602 or 651-296-2448 to find out if the public adjuster is licensed and/or has a disciplinary action.
2. **Ask** about the fee.
3. **Obtain a written contract** clearly identifying all fees.
4. **Evaluate** whether any additional recovery that you might get based on the public adjuster's services will be enough to offset the fee.

### Avoid Public Adjusters who...

- Represent themselves as being affiliated with a governmental agency
- Refuse to provide a written contract
- Suggest that their services are mandatory or necessary for the insurance claims process.
- Use high pressure sales tactics.

## For More Information

Minnesota Department of Commerce  
800-657-3602 or 651-296-2488  
[www.insurance.mn.gov](http://www.insurance.mn.gov)

## License Lookup

<http://www.commerce.state.mn.us/LicenseLookupMain.html>

## **BBB provides tips to storm damage victims**

May 11, 2011 – St. Paul, MN – The Better Business Bureau of Minnesota and North Dakota (BBB) is offering guidance to area residents who suffered damage to their homes during hailstorms on the evening of May 10, and reminds people to take precautions when cleaning up and making repair decisions. Though most contractors have your best interests in mind, there are those few that are only interested in making a fast dollar. To avoid those bad actors, the BBB provides the following tips to homeowners who have experienced property damage:

Contact your insurance company immediately to inquire about policy coverage and specific filing requirements. This gets the ball rolling on the claim process.

Document the damage to your property (and autos); take pictures or video if possible.

Do not make any permanent repairs until you get approval from your insurance company. Your insurer might not fully reimburse you for permanent repairs made without their authorization.

Make any minor repairs to limit further damage to the home. You may be liable for damage that occurs after a storm has passed, so make temporary repairs, such as boarding up broken windows or throwing a tarp over a leaky roof. If you have to make temporary repairs to protect your home from the elements, be sure to save all of your receipts.

Get references from friends and relatives and contact the Better Business Bureau to obtain Reliability Reports on any company you are considering hiring. Visit our Website 24 hours a day at [www.bbb.org](http://www.bbb.org). Or call 651-699-1111, toll-free at 1-800-646-6222. Shop around and get more than one estimate.

Ask all companies for proof of liability and workers compensation insurance as well as a license to do work in Minnesota. A contractor should be responsible for obtaining all necessary permits, not you. Local or national companies may both do a fine job with your storm damage repair needs. If you choose to do business with someone who is not local, be sure to understand who will be taking care of any service needs that may arise after the completion of the project.

Understand the difference between warranties and guarantees. The manufacturer warranties their products and contractors have warranties on service. Contractors may also offer customer service guarantees. Get copies of any/all warranties and guarantees.

Refrain from filing an insurance claim on something that you do not intend to fix. There could be repercussions from your insurance company when you do not make repairs you are being compensated for. Keep in mind that if you hold a mortgage on your home, your mortgage company may have a vested interest in you making the repairs and most will mandate you to make the repairs. Most checks from insurance come to the consumer with both the consumer's name and the mortgage company's name. Both need to sign off on the check.

Some companies list bids on their own contract to do service work on your home/property and some do not (basing their pricing on "insurance allowance"). Both are acceptable methods of conducting business.

Prepare a written contract agreement with anyone you hire. It should specify the work to be done, the materials to be used, and the price breakdown for both labor and materials. Be aware that anything you sign is a contract. Read carefully and avoid signing an "estimate" or "authorization" form before you have actually decided to hire a particular contractor. Pay special attention to any details in bold, that are underlined or that you need to initial.

Be sure the name, address, license number and phone number of the contractor appear on all invoices and contracts!

Any promises made orally should be written into the contract, including warranties on materials or labor.

Never pay in full for all repairs in advance, and do not pay cash.

Review all documentation before signing on the dotted line and before making any payment. Be sure it specifies the schedule for releasing payments to the contractor. Ask for a start and end date for the work to be done.

Although you may be anxious to get things back to normal, avoid letting your emotions get the better of you. Don't be pressured into making an immediate decision with a long-term impact. Make temporary repairs if necessary. Storm victims should never feel forced to make a hasty decision or to choose an unknown contractor.

The Minnesota Department of Commerce has developed a one-stop shop to help Minnesota homeowners and businesses prepare for natural disasters. Among the tools on their site is a checklist that consumers can use to take inventory of their belongings. Consumers can also download the free myHome Scr.APP.book app for iPhone® users by visiting the iTunes® App Store or searching 'NAIC' in the app store from their phone. Research suggests 48 percent of consumers do not have an inventory of their

possessions. Of those who do, 32 percent have no photos and 58 percent have no receipts.

Their Home Inventory Checklist will walk consumers from room to room in their home and help them compile a thorough list of their property. By completing the checklist, homeowners who do file an insurance claim or qualify for assistance will know what they had in their home that needs to be replaced.

For questions regarding insurance, call the Minnesota Department of Commerce Consumer Reponse Team at 651-296-2488 or 800-657-3602 (outside Twin Cities Metro area). You can also visit their website at [www.insurance.mn.gov](http://www.insurance.mn.gov).

# Insurance Catastrophic Contacts for Homeowners

## Contact Information: Minnesota Property Insurers

If your insurance company is not on this list, contact your agent or company directly to start the claim process.

<b>AAA</b>	1-800-222-1333	<a href="http://mn-ia.aaa.com">http://mn-ia.aaa.com</a>
<b>Allied Insurance</b>	1-800-532-1436	<a href="http://www.alliedinsurance.com">www.alliedinsurance.com</a>
<b>Allstate Insurance Company</b>	1-800-54-Storm	<a href="http://www.Allstate.com">www.Allstate.com</a>
<b>American Family</b>	1-800-MYAMFAM (1-800-692-6326)	<a href="http://www.amfam.com">www.amfam.com</a>
<b>American National General Insurance Company</b>	1-800-333-2860	<a href="http://www.anpac.com">www.anpac.com</a>
<b>Ameriprise Auto &amp; Home Insurance</b>	1-800-872-5246	<a href="http://www14.ameriprise.com">www14.ameriprise.com</a>
<b>Amica Mutual</b>	1-800-242-6422	<a href="http://www.amica.com">www.amica.com</a>
<b>Austin Mutual</b>	1-800-328-4628	<a href="http://www.austinmutual.com">www.austinmutual.com</a>
<b>Auto-Owners Insurance</b>	517-323-1200 1-888-ClaimAO after hours (1-888-252-4626)	<a href="http://www.auto-owners.com">www.auto-owners.com</a>
<b>Century Insurance Group</b>	1-800-878-7389	<a href="http://www.centurysurety.com">www.centurysurety.com</a>
<b>Country Financial</b>	1-800-846-0100	<a href="http://www.countryfinancial.com">www.countryfinancial.com</a>
<b>Employers Mutual Casualty</b>	1-888-362-2255	<a href="http://www.emcins.com">www.emcins.com</a>
<b>Farm Bureau Financial Services</b>	1-800-226-6383	<a href="http://www.fbfs.com">www.fbfs.com</a>
<b>Farmers Insurance Group</b>	1-800-HelpPoint (1-800-435-7764)	<a href="http://www.farmers.com">www.farmers.com</a>
<b>Foremost Insurance Group</b>	1-800-527-3907	<a href="http://www.foremost.com">www.foremost.com</a>
<b>GMRC</b>	1-877-467-2252	<a href="http://www.grinnellmutual.com/">http://www.grinnellmutual.com/</a>
<b>Harleysville</b>	1-800-892-8877	<a href="http://www.harleysvillegroup.com">www.harleysvillegroup.com</a>
<b>Hartford Steam Boiler Inspection &amp; Insurance</b>	1-888-HSB-LOSS (1-888-472-5677)	<a href="http://www.hsb.com">www.hsb.com</a>
<b>Horace Mann Companies</b>	1-800-999-1030	<a href="http://www.horacemann.com">www.horacemann.com</a>

<b>Integrity</b>	1-800-348-1741	<a href="http://www.integrityinsurance.com">www.integrityinsurance.com</a>
<b>Liberty Mutual</b>	1-800-2-CLAIMS	<a href="http://www.libertymutual.com">www.libertymutual.com</a>
<b>Met Life</b>	1-800-854-6011	<a href="http://www.metlife.com">www.metlife.com</a>
<b>Minnesota FAIR Plan</b>	612-338-7584 Twin Cities 800-524-1640 Outside Twin Cities	<a href="http://www.mnfairplan.org">http://www.mnfairplan.org</a>
<b>National Farmers Union Property &amp; Casualty Co.</b>	1-866-NFU-LOSS (1-866-638-5677)	<a href="http://www.nfuic.com">www.nfuic.com</a>
<b>Nationwide Insurance</b>	1-800-421-3535	<a href="http://www.nationwide.com">www.nationwide.com</a>
<b>North Star Mutual</b>	1-800-622-5230	<a href="http://www.nstarco.com">www.nstarco.com</a>
<b>Old United Casualty</b>	1-800-866-6090	<a href="http://www.oldunited.com">www.oldunited.com</a>
<b>Progressive</b>	1-800-776-4737	<a href="http://www.progressive.com/homeowners/">http://www.progressive.com/homeowners/</a>
<b>RAM Mutual Insurance Company</b>	218-879-3321	<a href="http://www.rammutual.com">www.rammutual.com</a>
<b>SECURA</b>	1-800-318-2136	<a href="http://www.secura.net">www.secura.net</a>
<b>State Farm</b>	1-800-SF Claim (1-800-732-5246)	<a href="http://www.statefarm.com">www.statefarm.com</a>
<b>Travelers</b>	1-800-CLAIM33	<a href="http://www.travelers.com">www.travelers.com</a>
<b>USAA</b>	1-800-531-USAA (1-800-531-8722)	<a href="http://www.usaa.com">www.usaa.com</a>
<b>West Bend Mutual</b>	1-877-922-5246	<a href="http://www.thesilverlining.com">www.thesilverlining.com</a>

**For More Information about Insurance**  
 Minnesota Department of Commerce  
 800-657-3602 or 651-296-2488  
[www.insurance.mn.gov](http://www.insurance.mn.gov)

## Before you need your insurance

- CDs • records • tapes • sewing machines • cameras • answering machine • phones • washer • dryer • heaters • air conditioners • fans
- vacuum cleaner • exercise equipment • carpet • rugs • drapery • blinds • shutters • bookcases • chairs • lamps • light fixtures • clocks
- mirrors • vases • collections • pictures • wall hangings • sofa • chairs
- coffee table • end table • entertainment center • wall units • piano
- musical instruments • buffet • table • chairs • china • cabinet • china
- silverware • crystal • tablecloth • napkins • tea sets • serving table • carts • beds • sheets • pillowcases • comforters • dressers • chests • dressing tables • night stands • shoes • coats • furs • suits • dresses
- sweaters • sports apparel • shirts • skirts • jewelry • refrigerator
- freezer • stove • microwave • oven • dishwasher • coffee makers • small appliances • pots • pans • dishes • glasses • utensils • hair dryer • scale • shower curtains • towels • desk • computer • printer • scanner • fax • books • business supplies • luggage • trunks • sports equipment • toys • outdoor games • bicycles • small boats • trailers • lawnmower • snowblower • shovels • sprinkler • hoses • wheelbarrel • ladders • work bench • carpentry tools • holiday decorations • garden furniture • umbrellas • outdoor cooking equipment • planters • jacuzzi

## **PUTTING TOGETHER A HOME INVENTORY... IT IS EASIER BEFORE A DISASTER THAN AFTERWARDS.**

You've just finished enjoying the New Year's Day bowl games on that big high-definition flat-screen TV you got for Christmas. And the accompanying home entertainment system probably made it feel and sound like you were there in person.

It would be a shame if you lost these expensive new toys to a house fire, or flooding, or a wind storm. Worse still, what if your insurance settlement paid you less than the value of your possessions because you didn't know what exactly you had?

A 2008 survey by the National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC) found that 48 percent of U.S. consumers did not have a list of their possessions.

It's a lot easier to take stock of your insurance coverage and possessions now rather than after a fire has gutted your home, or spring floods have set it afloat, or a wind storm has blown it all away. There's enough to think about without having to try to remember everything you owned once the insurance adjuster arrives. Many people also mistakenly believe their homeowners insurance will cover them in the event of a flood; it does not. Revisit your policy or call your insurance agent to be sure.

After a disaster, an insurance adjuster is going to hand you a piece of paper and a pencil and say write down all your possessions. This is when you will wish you had a home inventory list. Whether you rent or own, having such a list ready to hand to the adjuster can speed up the processing of your insurance claim by days. The list doesn't have to be extremely detailed, but it helps.

Taking pictures is handy, because they can show the brand and model. Some homeowners or renters may shoot video, and as they focus on each item, they describe it. Make a note of the brand, model number, serial number and what you paid for each item. And remember those commonly overlooked belongings such as clothing, which can quickly add up to thousands of dollars.

Once you've made your list, don't forget to update it when you buy that new TV or bedroom set.

### ***Tips for taking inventory of home possessions:***

- Document each item as completely as possible, including brand and model number.
- Include receipts and/or cancelled checks to prove what you paid for items.
- Remember to include items you don't use regularly, such as holiday decorations, sports equipment or tools.
- Review your insurance policy to know what is covered and whether your possessions are insured for actual cash value (the amount it would take to replace or repair the item minus any depreciation) or for replacement cost (the amount it would take to repair or replace the item without deducting for depreciation).
- For rare or valuable items such as jewelry, antiques or art, you may want to consider adding additional insurance—a rider—to your policy.
- Keep the completed list outside of your home. Store it at your office, a family member's house or safe-deposit box.
- Update the list annually.

### ***More Resources:***

- A free and simple home inventory software program is available from the Insurance Information Institute.  
[www.knowyourstuff.org/iii/login.html](http://www.knowyourstuff.org/iii/login.html)
- For flood insurance information.  
FEMA: [www.fema.gov/plan/prevent/floodins/infocon.shtm](http://www.fema.gov/plan/prevent/floodins/infocon.shtm)  
National Flood Insurance Program: [www.floodsmart.gov](http://www.floodsmart.gov) 888-379-9531

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**LIVING ROOM/DEN CHECKLIST**

Item	Manufacturer	Model, serial number	Date bought	Purchase price
Sofa				
Loveseat				
Recliner				
Chairs				
Ottoman				
Coffee table				
End tables				
Computer				
Computer monitor				
External hard drive				
Computer peripherals				
Television				
Entertainment Center				
Stereo				
Stereo equipment				
CDs, DVDs, tapes, records				
Video game console				
Video games				
Sound system				
Bookcases				
Books				
Mirrors				

LIVING ROOM/DEN CHECKLIST

Item	Manufacturer	Model, serial number	Date bought	Purchase price
Carpet				
Area rug				
Fireplace equipment				
Piano, musical instruments				
Curtains, blinds				
Pillows, cushions				
Art, wall décor				
Knickknacks				
Blankets				
Storage/chests				
Lamps				
Light fixtures				
Telephone				
Clock				

HOME OFFICE/FAMILY ROOM CHECKLIST

Item	Manufacturer	Model, serial number	Date bought	Purchase price
Sofa				
Loveseat				
Chairs				
Ottoman				
Desk				
Coffee table				
End tables				
Computer				
Computer monitor				
External hard drive				
Computer peripherals				
Laptop computer				
Fax machine				
Scanner				
Television				
Stereo				
Stereo equipment				
DVD player				
CDs, DVDs, tapes, records				
Video game console				
Video games				
Sound system				

HOME OFFICE/FAMILY ROOM CHECKLIST

Item	Manufacturer	Model, serial number	Date bought	Purchase price
Video recorder				
Piano, musical instruments				
Carpet				
Area rugs				
Curtains, blinds				
Pillows, cushions				
Art, wall décor				
Knickknacks				
Blankets				
Storage/chests				
Lamps				
Light fixtures				
Telephone				
Clock				
Book cases				
Books				
Mirrors				
Entertainment Center				
File cabinets				
Office supplies				
Fireplace equipment				

**KITCHEN CHECKLIST**

Item	Manufacturer	Model, serial number	Date bought	Purchase price
Stove				
Refrigerator				
Refrigerator contents				
Dishwasher				
Cabinets				
Sink disposal				
Freezer				
Freezer contents				
Table				
Chairs, stools				
Microwave				
Convection oven				
Electric grill				
Coffee maker				
Toaster				
Blender, processor				
Mixer				
Toaster oven				
Waffle iron				
Clock				
Television				
Radio				

**KITCHEN CHECKLIST**

Item	Manufacturer	Model, serial number	Date bought	Purchase price
Dishes				
Glasses				
Pots and pans				
Bowls				
Silverware				
Cooking utensils				
Cookbooks				
Pantry items, food				
Linens				
Spices				
Knickknacks				
Lamps				
Light fixtures				
Art, wall décor				
Telephone				
Computer				
Computer monitor				
Computer peripherals				
Area rugs				

DINING ROOM CHECKLIST

Item	Manufacturer	Model, serial number	Date bought	Purchase price
Table				
Chairs				
Buffet				
China cabinet				
China				
Serving table, cart				
Serving dishes				
Crystal				
Silverware				
Tea, coffee sets				
Linens				
Liquor cabinet				
Candelabra				
Curtains, blinds				
Art, wall décor				
Carpet				
Area rugs				
Lamps				
Light fixtures				
Mirrors				

LAUNDRY/UTILITY/CRAFTS ROOM CHECKLIST

Item	Manufacturer	Model, serial number	Date bought	Purchase price
Clothes washer				
Clothes dryer				
Table				
Cabinets				
Vacuum cleaner				
Cleaning tools				
Cleaning supplies				
Shelving units				
Iron, ironing board				
Sewing machine				
Sewing supplies				
Craft supplies				
Storage containers				
Carpet shampooer				
Telephone				
Art, wall décor				
Knickknacks				
Area rugs				
Curtains, blinds				

**MASTER BEDROOM CHECKLIST**

Item	Manufacturer	Model, serial number	Date bought	Purchase price
Bed				
Mattress, box springs				
Night tables				
Sofa, loveseat				
Chairs				
Ottoman				
Dressers				
Storage/chests				
Armoire				
Dressing table				
Bed linens, pillows				
Computer				
Computer monitor				
Computer peripherals				
Entertainment center				
Television				
Stereo				
Stereo equipment				
DVD player				
CDs, DVDs, tapes, records				
Sound system				
Telephone				

**MASTER BEDROOM CHECKLIST**

Item	Manufacturer	Model, serial number	Date bought	Purchase price
Alarm clock, radio				
Bookcases				
Books				
Curtains, blinds				
Art, wall décor				
Knickknacks				
Blankets				
Lamps				
Light fixtures				

Female clothing	Brand	Date bought	Purchase price
Dresses			
Shirts, blouses			
Skirts			
Sweaters			
Dress pants			
Suits			
Jeans, casual pants			
Coats			
Shoes, boots			
Jewelry			
Accessories			

Male clothing	Brand	Date bought	Purchase price
Dress pants			
Suits			
Jeans, casual pants			
Sweaters			
Coats			
Supporting apparel			
Ties			
Shoes, boots			
Gloves, hats			
Belts, accessories			

**GIRL'S BEDROOM CHECKLIST**

Item	Manufacturer	Model, serial number	Date bought	Purchase price
Bed				
Mattress, box springs				
Night tables				
Dressers				
Storage/chests				
Armoire				
Dressing table				
Bed linens, pillows				
Desk				
Computer				
Computer monitor				
Computer peripherals				
Entertainment center				
Television				
Stereo				
Stereo equipment				
DVD player				
CDs, DVDs, tapes, records				
Telephone				
Alarm clock, radio				
Bookcases				
Books				

**GIRL'S BEDROOM CHECKLIST**

Item	Manufacturer	Model, serial number	Date bought	Purchase price
Curtains, blinds				
Art, wall décor				
Blankets				
Lamps				
Light fixtures				
Musical instruments				
Toys				
Collections				

Clothing	Brand	Date bought	Purchase price
Dresses			
Shirts, blouses			
Skirts			
Sweaters			
Dress pants			
Suits			
Jeans, casual pants			
Coats			
Sporting apparel			
Shoes			
Boots			

Clothing	Brand	Date bought	Purchase price
Hats, gloves			
Belts			
Scarves			
Purses			
Jewelry			

**BOY'S BEDROOM CHECKLIST**

Item	Manufacturer	Model, serial number	Date bought	Purchase price
Bed				
Mattress, box springs				
Night tables				
Dressers				
Storage/chests				
Armoire				
Dressing table				
Bed linens, pillows				
Desk				
Computer				
Computer monitor				
Computer peripherals				
Entertainment center				
Television				
Stereo				
Stereo equipment				
DVD player				
CDs, DVDs, tapes, records				
Telephone				
Alarm clock, radio				
Bookcases				
Books				

**BOY'S BEDROOM CHECKLIST**

Item	Manufacturer	Model, serial number	Date bought	Purchase price
Curtains, blinds				
Art, wall décor				
Blankets				
Lamps				
Light fixtures				
Musical instruments				
Toys				
Collections				

Clothing	Brand	Date bought	Purchase price
Jeans, casual pants			
Shirts			
Sweaters			
Dress pants			
Suits			
Sporting apparel			
Coats			
Shoes			
Boots			
Hats, gloves			
Belts			

Clothing	Brand	Date bought	Purchase price
Watches, jewelry			
Ties, accessories			

**GUEST BEDROOM CHECKLIST**

Item	Manufacturer	Model, serial number	Date bought	Purchase price
Bed				
Mattress, box springs				
Night tables				
Sofa, loveseat				
Chairs				
Ottoman				
Dressers				
Storage/chests				
Armoire				
Dressing table				
Bed linens, pillows				
Computer				
Television				
DVD player, DVDs				
Bookcases				
Telephone				
Alarm clock, radio				
Curtains, blinds				
Art, wall décor				
Blankets, quilts				
Lamps				
Light fixtures				

**BATHROOM I CHECKLIST**

Item	Manufacturer	Model, serial number	Date bought	Purchase price
Dressing table				
Cabinets (unattached)				
Chair				
Clothes hamper				
Storage containers				
Shelves (unattached)				
Towels, linens				
Clock, radio				
Television				
Electric razor				
Curling/flat iron				
Hair dryer				
Toiletries				
Medicine				
Scale				
Shower curtain				
Curtains, blinds				
Area rugs				
Art, wall décor				
Lamps				
Light fixtures				

**BATHROOM 2 CHECKLIST**

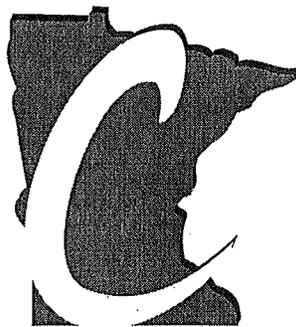
Item	Manufacturer	Model, serial number	Date bought	Purchase price
Dressing table				
Cabinets (unattached)				
Chair				
Clothes hamper				
Storage containers				
Shelves (unattached)				
Towels, linens				
Clock, radio				
Television				
Electric razor				
Curling/flat iron				
Hair dryer				
Toiletries				
Medicine				
Scale				
Shower curtain				
Curtains, blinds				
Area rugs				
Art, wall décor				
Lamps				
Light fixtures				

**OUTDOOR/SEASONAL CHECKLIST**

Item	Manufacturer	Model, serial number	Date bought	Purchase price
Patio/porch furniture				
Pillows, cushions				
Bicycles, sports equipment				
Holiday decorations				
Garden/yard tools, containers, supplies				
Planters, plants				
Lawn mower, weed trimmer, leaf blower				
Sprinkler, hoses				
Ladders				
Tool box				
Tools				
Tiller, shovels				
Trailer, boat				
Jacuzzi				
Outdoor games, toys				
Freezer, refrigerator, contents				
Cooking equipment				
Pet supplies				
Dehumidifier, heater				
Light fixtures				
Hobby supplies				
Storage, shelving units (unattached)				







**MINNESOTA**  
**DEPARTMENT OF**  
**COMMERCE**

85 7th Place East, Suite 500, St. Paul, MN 55101  
651-296-2488 800-657-3602 (outside Twin Cities area)  
[www.commerce.state.mn.us](http://www.commerce.state.mn.us) [www.insurance.mn.gov](http://www.insurance.mn.gov)

## **RENTER'S INSURANCE**

### **Some basic info about renter's insurance:**

- Renter's insurance is cheap and portable (you can take that insurance with you to your next apartment)
- The average renter's insurance policy costs between \$15 and \$30 per month
- Renter's insurance policies can cover everything from electronics to clothing to household appliances
- Replacing all of your possessions or being liable for an accident on your premises will cost much more
- Your landlord has insurance for structural damage to the building, and might even be protected against damage caused by tenants
- This coverage does not extend to your personal property

### **How much renter's insurance do you need?**

- Talk to your insurance agent or company about the property you want to protect and the property hazards you would like to be insured from
- Your agent can give you coverage policy specifics based on your state and the type of policy you want

### **How do you expedite your renter's insurance claim?**

- A home inventory – along with photos and proof of ownership – make it easier to file an accurate, detailed insurance claim in case your home is damaged or destroyed in a disaster
- A home inventory can also help determine how much coverage you need from your renter's insurance

## **For More Information**

Minnesota Department of Commerce  
800-657-3602 or 651-296-2488  
[www.insurance.mn.gov](http://www.insurance.mn.gov)

