TIPS TO NAVIGATE A HOMEOWNERS CLAIM WITH CONFIDENCE

Nobody expects to have to file a homeowners insurance claim, but when you do, it's hard to know where to start. Follow our tips below to help you understand and confidently navigate the claim process.

- ✓ **Assess the damage** – if you feel the damage will exceed your deductible, then you will want to file a claim.

- ✓ **File your claim quickly** – most policies include a condition that requires you to file the claim promptly following the event.

- ✓ **Mitigate further damage** – make your insurance representative aware of your intent to prevent further damage by starting the clean-up or repair process.

- ✓ **Photograph or video damage before mitigation** – this includes both the building and personal property. If possible, retain the damaged personal property until an adjuster can inspect it.

- ✓ **Keep a logbook with notes** – from the day the loss occurs, keep track of who you spoke to about the claim, when, and what you discussed for better organization for future conversations.

- ✓ **Follow up on verbal correspondence in writing** – memorializing conversations via email allows you greater traction if a discrepancy arises later in the process.

- ✓ **Keep all receipts** – if your home is uninhabitable due to the damage, you should have Additional Living Expense Coverage, which pays for living expenses beyond your normal incurred, such as alternative housing, food, and utilities.

- ✓ **Don't be surprised if your adjuster is reassigned several times** – a reassignment may occur if an employee leaves, a claim becomes too complex, or if there are needs elsewhere in the company.

- ✓ **Actively communicate during the physical inspection** – while the adjuster is at your property, point out any items you feel should be included in the estimate.

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☑ **List all personal property you are claiming** – this can be difficult in the event of theft or fire, which is why pre-loss photos or videos are helpful.

☑ **Locate a trustworthy contractor to prepare a comparative estimate** – be sure to point out all damages. If the contractor agrees that additional items should be included in the estimate, make sure they explain why.

☑ **Vet recommended contractors** – your insurance company may recommend a contractor or restoration company with which they partner. Properly vet them to ensure they are the right fit for you.

☑ **Be wary of door knockers and blind contracts** – some contractors may try to get you to sign a contract without you knowing the services you'll be receiving, potentially signing away your rights to be involved in your own insurance claim. Before signing anything, get copies of the contractor's license and certificate of insurance. To be extra sure, call their insurance company to ensure the policy is in effect.

☑ **Expect to see depreciation applied to your claim** – if you have a replacement cost policy, most of your depreciation should be recoverable, meaning you can recover the depreciation once the work is complete.

☑ **Communicate with your lienholder or mortgage company** – if you have a lender for the property, they will likely be listed on any checks paid out. Call them before you receive any payment to learn how to have the funds released.

☑ **Report hidden damages** – contact your insurance company before moving forward with additional repairs so they can decide the next steps. If you fail to do this, they may deny further payment.

☑ **Avoid switching insurance companies mid-claim** – doing this is extremely difficult, if not impossible. An insurance company will not write a new policy unless all the damage has been repaired.

Seeing the claims process through from start to finish can be a lengthy undertaking, but taking it step by step helps to ensure that your property is restored to its pre-incident state the right way and on the first try.

Contact Us for More Information

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