



"Survivors helping Survivors"

Steps to a Successful Insurance Claim Settlement

You paid good money to have your claim handled fairly. Our experience has shown policyholders frequently receive less than they are entitled to because they do not know their rights, and "trust" the insurance company to treat them fairly. As President Reagan said, "Trust, but verify." Verify by getting enough information so you know your rights, and know when you are being treated fairly and when you are not.

1. **TAKE YOUR TIME!** Patience pays off!
2. **DO YOUR HOMEWORK ON YOUR CLAIM.** *Do not take shortcuts which will probably cost you money.* Your homework, which does pay off, includes:
 - a. Reading and understanding your policy
 - b. Finding "like kind and quality" substitute living arrangements
 - c. Preparing a detailed and accurate **PERSONAL PROPERTY INVENTORY**
 - d. Completing an accurate **SCOPE OF LOSS** of your home
3. **COOPERATE** with your insurance company and its claim representatives, *but do not "roll over" on their "offers" and accept less than your insured loss.*
 - a. **BE POLITE** and **HONEST**, but **FIRM, FAIR** and **PERSISTENT**.
4. **CREATE A PAPER TRAIL** – *after all, your insurance company is.*
 - a. **KEEP DOCUMENTATION** Of all communications in a secure binder.
 - b. **Confirm all conversations** in writing back to your insurance company
5. **DO NOT SIGN A RELEASE** – *unless you are certain you know your entire loss! A release gives up any future rights in your claim, known or UNKNOWN.*
 - a. **You are not required to sign any form of "release" for settlement amounts rightfully yours.**
6. **KNOW YOUR COVERAGES. YOUR INSURANCE COMPANY MUST:**
 - a. Provide a copy of all your declarations page, policy and policy endorsements.
 - b. Advise you of all your coverages in effect at the time of your insured loss.
7. **COVERAGES can be confusing. For example:**
 - a. Debris removal coverage includes debris of other structures and personal property.
 - b. Additional living expense (ALE) coverage allows for a living standard of equal value (like kind and quality) to how you lived at the time of your insured loss.
8. **Accept PARTIAL payments of your claim.**
 - a. Insist the insurance company pay you immediately each time your insurance claim representative determines an **UNDISPUTED AMOUNT** of your insured loss.
9. **DO NOT get bogged down and distracted by concentrating too much on your PERSONAL PROPERTY INVENTORY.**
 - a. Plenty of helpful sources are available on the Internet and locally.
10. **HIRE YOUR OWN QUALIFIED EXPERTS** to determine the current replacement cost of the exact (as-built) house you lost through an accurate **SCOPE OF LOSS**.
 - a. **AVOID using the insurance company's "Preferred" or "Approved" contractor.**