

November 30, 2012

Extreme temperatures herald season of severe storms and bushfires

Near-record temperatures across many parts of Australia this week are a reminder to property owners to prepare for extreme weather this summer.

The Insurance Council of Australia (ICA) advises home and business owners to check their insurance policies to ensure their properties are protected from the storms, bushfires and floods expected this season.

This weekend the weather bureau expects soaring temperatures in many cities and regions, including Sydney, Brisbane, Canberra, Adelaide and Hobart. Storms are forecast for South Australia, while the weather bureau has issued fire warnings for much of the country.

Yesterday, Melbourne experienced one of its hottest November days and nights in more than 100 years, with temperatures in Mildura and Ouyen, in regional Victoria, passing 45C.

ICA CEO Rob Whelan advised property owners to review their insurance policies now and said high summer temperatures were here to stay.

“Tomorrow marks the first day of summer, but for many of us it has arrived early and hard,” he said.

“We have seen how higher temperatures can lead to storms, with south-east Queensland and northern New South Wales recently experiencing the damage these can wreak on homes and vehicles.

“We have also seen bushfires in most states. The very wet weather Australia has experienced over the past two years has created optimal conditions for the growth of grasslands, providing potential fires with an abundant fuel source.”

Mr Whelan said reviewing insurance policies should form part of the preparation that property owners should take at this time of year.

“The insurance industry offers policies to suit your circumstances and protect you in the event of damage caused to your assets by storm, bushfire, hail or flood,” he said.

“For example, data released by the ICA in September shows insurers offer a huge range of policies that provide flood cover.

“Nearly 80 per cent of household policies sold contain flood insurance compared with just 3 per cent in 2006. Consumers can choose to purchase products that include this component, or choose to opt out of flood cover if they do not require it.

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“Give your insurer a call, check the sum insured matches the value of your assets and if necessary make adjustments to your policy. The ICA has produced storm and bushfire preparation checklists to help homeowners.

“The home and contents market is highly competitive. Shop around and find the best policy that suits your circumstances.

“Business owners should consider the impact of extreme temperatures on their business and check what would happen if services essential to its operation were interrupted by a power failure.”

Policyholders can take steps now to make sure they are financially protected from severe weather:

- Check your insurance policy. Contact your insurer if there is part of your policy you do not understand
- Review the value of your home and contents, vehicles and other assets
- Be aware of what your policy includes and what it doesn't

The ICA's storm and bushfire preparation checklists are available at:
<http://www.insurancecouncil.com.au/for-consumers/consumer-tips>

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The cost of recent storms:

Event	Date	Normalised cost*
Victorian severe storms	February 4-6, 2011	\$487.6 million
Victorian Christmas Day storms	December 25, 2011	\$728.6 million
Perth storm	March 22, 2010	\$1.01 billion
Melbourne storm	March 6, 2010	\$1.16 billion
NSW and Queensland inundation and storm damage	May 21, 2009	\$55 million
Brisbane storms	November 16, 2008	\$355 million
South Australia, Tasmania and Victorian storm	April 20, 2008	\$79 million
West Sydney severe hailstorms	December 9, 2007	\$486 million
Newcastle and Hunter Valley severe storm	June 8-10, 2007	\$1.74 billion
Sydney hailstorm	April 14, 1999	\$4.29 billion

**Where applicable costs have been adjusted to the equivalent 2010 dollar value*

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State Emergency Services storm advice:

- **Victoria SES** Chief Officer Operations Trevor White said much of the damage caused by storms was preventable.

“By preparing their properties before a storm hits, Victorians can cut the risk of costly damage, injury or even death significantly. While there are precautions to be taken during a storm event, some simple preparation beforehand can save a lot of money in the long run,” he said.

- **Emergency Management Queensland** Assistant Director-General Bruce Grady said with this year’s storm and cyclone season upon us, it was imperative for Queenslanders to be prepared.

“When disaster strikes, communities can be isolated, power can be cut and damaged roads and debris can prevent emergency services from reaching you,” he said.

“While SES volunteers are always ready to help, it is vital residents ensure they are well prepared before a disaster strikes.

“Ensure emergency plans and emergency kits are up to date, homes are prepared, yards are maintained and residents know how they can seek valuable information if required.”

- **South Australia SES** Chief Officer Chris Beattie said much of the damage caused by storms could be prevented by homeowners.

“When severe weather threatens we urge all homeowners to check weather forecasts regularly and listen to their local radio for updates,” he said.

- **Tasmania SES** Director Andrew Lea said preparation is the key to avoid damage to your home and assets.

“Disasters will happen in Tasmania, however if you know your risk to floods and storms, and you prepare for them, you will reduce the impact,” he said.