

Monday February 10, 2020

Insurers declare Catastrophe for east coast storms and flooding

The Insurance Council of Australia (ICA) has declared a catastrophe for property losses caused by storms and flooding along the east coast since February 5.

As of 7am today, insurers have received 10,000 claims with the value of claims estimated at \$45 million. Most claims are for property damage caused by storm runoff, flooding, strong winds and heavy rain.

ICA Head of Risk and Operations Karl Sullivan said: "Insurers expect a large number of claims will be lodged over the next 48 hours as property owners inspect the damage to homes and businesses and contact their insurers. It's likely many householders are unable to contact their insurers due to telecommunications and power interruptions, but insurers are standing by to help.

"So far most of the claims are from south-east Queensland and along New South Wales coastal regions, but damage has also been reported several hundred kilometres inland and in the ACT.

"The Catastrophe declaration means claims will be given priority by insurers. The Insurance Council is operating its disaster hotline **1800 734 621** to provide guidance to affected property owners. This is not a claims lodgement line.

"Insurers are also monitoring the extent of insured damage in Western Australia's Pilbara region following Cyclone Damien over the weekend."

This is the sixth Catastrophe declared in the past five months. In September, bushfires in NSW and Queensland resulted in 497 claims worth \$37 million; October's Rappville NSW bushfires led to 255 claims and insured losses of \$19 million; and more than 20,000 claims worth \$1.65 billion have been lodged for the November to February bushfires that affected Queensland, NSW, Victoria and South Australia. The ICA also declared Catastrophes for hailstorms in November (SE Queensland, 22,000 claims, \$166 million) and January (ACT, Victoria and NSW, 69,850 claims worth \$638 million).

Tips for householders:

- If your property has been badly damaged, don't enter it until it is safe to do so. Beware of snakes and other animals that may be sheltering in your home or business
- Speak to your insurer before you attempt or authorise any building work, including emergency repairs, and ask for the insurer's permission in writing. Unauthorised repair work may not be covered by your policy

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- If your home is unsafe, notify your local authorities and check with your insurer whether you can claim temporary housing expenses
- Take photographs or video of damage to property and possessions. Keep samples of material from damaged goods to support your claim. This will assist your insurer to process your claim as quickly as possible
- You can remove and discard any water or mud-damaged goods that may pose a health risk, such as saturated carpets and soft furnishings. Remember to take photos and keep samples of materials and fabrics to show the insurance assessor
- Beware of scammers offering to provide repairs for cash
- Do not be concerned if you can't find your insurance papers. Insurers keep electronic records and only need your name and address

For storm recovery tips visit www.understandinsurance.com.au/types-of-disasters/storms

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