

Thursday December 21, 2017

Insurance Council declares a catastrophe for Victorian storms

The Insurance Council of Australia (ICA) has declared a catastrophe for damage caused by storms that struck parts of regional Victoria and metropolitan Melbourne on Tuesday December 19.

ICA CEO Rob Whelan said insurers had received more than 25,000 claims by 11am today, with insured losses estimated at \$105 million.

He said insurers expected many more claims would be lodged over the next week as householders, motorists and small businesses assessed the damage.

Mr Whelan said: "The Insurance Council encourages insured property owners and motor vehicle owners who have suffered damage from these storms to contact their insurers or insurance brokers as soon as they can to get the claims process moving and receive the assistance they're entitled to under their policy.

"A significant number of claims is for hail damage to cars and to roofs, while other damage has been caused by water inundating properties.

"Insurers are standing by to handle customer inquiries. They are prioritising claims from this disaster, and will organise any emergency repairs or temporary accommodation where it's applicable under the policy."

Under the catastrophe declaration the ICA has:

- Established an industry taskforce to address and identify any issues that arise
- Activated its disaster hotline – 1800 734 621 – helping policyholders if they are uncertain which insurer they are with, or have general inquiries about the claims process
- Mobilised ICA staff to liaise with local services and affected policyholders

This is the fourth catastrophe declared this year by the ICA. The other catastrophes were:

- Cyclone Debbie, March 28, 2017: Insured losses of \$1.613 billion from 73,556 claims
- NSW storms, February 19, 2017: Insured losses of \$512 million from 53,720 claims
- NSW bushfires, February 12-18, 2017: Losses of \$33.5 million from 2000 claims

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TOP TIPS FOR RECOVERY AFTER A STORM:

Householders and businesses can take some simple steps to speed up the recovery and claims process following a disaster.

- Return to your property when emergency services declare it safe to do so
- Only enter your property when you are satisfied you are not at risk
- Contact your insurance company as soon as possible to check what your policy includes or excludes, and seek guidance on the claims process
- Start cleaning up
- Take pictures or videos of damage to the property and possessions as evidence for your claim
- Make an inventory of damaged or destroyed items, including noting brands, models and serial numbers of whitegoods and electrical items
- Remove and discard any water or mud-damaged goods that pose a health risk, such as saturated carpets and soft furnishings
- Keep samples of materials and fabrics to show the assessor
- Make a list of each item and include a detailed description, such as brand, model and serial number
- Store damaged or destroyed items somewhere safe
- Speak to your insurer before authorising repairs. Emergency repairs should be undertaken only in the first instance to make the property safe

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