

SCC'S BUREAU OF INSURANCE OFFERS VIRGINIANS TIPS FOR PREPARING FOR AND DEALING WITH DAMAGE CAUSED BY HURRICANES AND OTHER STORMS

Hurricanes and their accompanying winds and rains are forces to be reckoned with. In Virginia alone, hurricanes have caused dozens of deaths and billions of dollars in damage to homes, businesses, and other property during the past decade. Virginia, like much of the East Coast, is watching and waiting anxiously now as Hurricane Sandy churns its way through the Atlantic Ocean toward the United States.

Virginia Insurance Commissioner Jacqueline K. Cunningham urges Virginians to know what to do before a hurricane or other disaster strikes your home or business property. The Bureau is your source for insurance information relating to disasters.

The potential threat of property damage from Hurricane Sandy will raise many questions for Virginia policyholders. Those questions will include how to minimize property damage and, if such damage occurs, how to expedite the processing of claims with your insurance company.

Due to the high winds associated with hurricanes, it is a good idea to secure all outside furniture and remove all other loose items from your property. You can make the claim process easier if you have a complete list of the belongings in your home. This list should include all of the vital information about your belongings, such as the brand name, price, date of purchase, model, and serial number. Receipts and photos are always helpful.

The National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC) offers a free smartphone app – myHOME Scr.APP.book – to help you create a home inventory. This app lets users photograph and capture images, descriptions, bar codes, and serial numbers, and then stores them electronically for safekeeping. To download myHOME Scr.APP.book for iPhone® users, visit the iTunes® App Store or do a search for “NAIC” in the App Store from your iPhone. Additional information about the app, as well as a simple home inventory checklist, are available on the NAIC website at www.insureuonline.org.

Advance planning is the key to successfully weathering disasters. Now is the time to gather your insurance documents, such as your homeowners, automobile, life, health, and business insurance policies. Should you need to report a claim or evacuate a high risk area, it is important to have all your insurance information with you. Be sure you have copies of your insurance policies readily available, as well as information on how to reach your insurance company or agent to report a claim, such as the telephone number for the claims department. Since flood damage is not covered by a standard homeowners or renter's insurance policy, if you have a separate flood insurance policy, remember to keep a copy of the policy and the contact details for the insurance company with you. Know how your policy's deductibles are applied in the event you

need to file a claim. Contact your insurance company or agent if you have questions about your coverage.

The Bureau of Insurance offers free consumer guides with information about what to do when a disaster strikes. The guides, entitled “What to Do After an Insured Commercial Property Loss” and “What to Do After an Insured Homeowners Loss,” deal specifically with insurance-related disaster recovery issues. Both provide answers to the most commonly asked questions about settling disaster-related insurance problems. These guides as well as other helpful tips for dealing with disasters are available on the Bureau’s website at <http://www.scc.virginia.gov/boi/disaster>

The Bureau also has specially trained staff who can help consumers with their disaster-related insurance questions or problems. For more information, contact the Bureau of Insurance at (804) 371-9185 (Property and Casualty Division) or (804) 371-9691 (Life and Health Division) or toll-free at 1-877-310-6560. Consumers who are hard of hearing or speech impaired may call through the SCC’s Telecommunications Device for the Deaf and hard of hearing (TDD) at (804) 371-9206. Correspondence may be mailed to the Bureau of Insurance at P.O. Box 1157, Richmond, VA 23218.