

## CONSUMER ADVISORY

### MAY INSURANCE TIP OF THE MONTH

Spring winds and summer monsoons can wreak havoc with your home. Make sure that you have the homeowner's insurance that you need to protect your property and know how to file a claim.

#### **#1 Before a Wind/Hail Storm -- Collect Your Insurance Information**

Before a storm hits, review your insurance policies. Make sure you know what is and is not covered. Wind/Hail Deductibles can be higher than your primary deductible. If you have questions, contact your insurance agent or company. Store copies of your insurance policies with your home inventory. Make sure to have a copy of your policy declarations page listing all of your coverages, as well as your insurance cards.

It is a good idea to store this information, and your home inventory, in a waterproof, fireproof box or safe. You should also save any records of work done on your home. **NOTE!** Flood damage is not covered by a standard homeowner's policy.

#### **#2. Prepare for the Worst**

There are steps you can take to help prevent damage from a Wind or Hail storm.

- Clear your yard of debris that could become projectiles in high winds
- Trim dead or overhanging branches from trees surrounding your home
- Make sure the roof sheathing is properly secured
- Check that end gables are securely fastened to the roof
- Check that windows, doors and garage doors are latched properly

#### **#3 After the Storm**

The days following a Wind and Hail Storm can be overwhelming and stressful. It can also be confusing when it comes time to report a claim for property damage. Here are some tips:

- Inspect your home for damage to the structure and roof after every storm.
- If damage is found, contact your insurance company as soon as possible to file a claim.
- Follow the instructions given by your insurer and keep a record of the people you spoke with. Records should include date, name and title.
- Save all your receipts if you make any repairs. Be sure to give your insurance company all the information they need or your claim may be delayed.
- Take photographs/video before you do any clean up or repairs.
- After you've documented the damage, make the repairs necessary to prevent further damage. **DO NOT** make any permanent repairs before the insurance company is able to inspect the damage and your insurance carrier approves the repairs.
- Always ask questions if you don't understand.
- Don't rush to a settlement. If possible, determine what it will cost to repair your property before you meet with a representative of your insurance company who will assess the damage to your property. If you and your insurance company disagree on the offer made to repair your property, be prepared to negotiate if necessary.

- If your claim is denied, review the terms of your policy for what is or is not covered. You may also file an appeal to your insurance company’s claim manager. If questions remain, you should contact the Office of the Superintendent of Insurance, Bureau of Consumer Assistance.

#### #4 Beware of Scams

Wind and Hail Storms can be a magnet for dishonest contractors. Be wary of anyone who shows up at your door and offers to do your home repairs. Take these steps to protect yourself:

- If an individual claims to be a public adjuster, ask for their license information. A public adjuster is a professional claims handler who is licensed and regulated by the state. A public adjuster can be hired by the home owner (policy holder) to assist with the claims process.
- You can verify a public adjuster’s license by visiting our website at [www.osi.state.nm.us](http://www.osi.state.nm.us). Once on our site, click “Producers” on the top bar and select “License Lookup.” If you suspect anyone or any entity is operating as a public adjuster without a license, you may report the activity by calling the Office of Superintendent of Insurance at **855-427-5674**.
- Investigate any contractor you are thinking of hiring and get more than one estimate for your repairs. You can check a contractor’s license at the website for the Construction Industries Division, [www.rld.state.nm.us/construction](http://www.rld.state.nm.us/construction). Don’t hire a contractor until you have worked out your claim with your insurance company.
- Check references, licensure and get everything in writing. This includes: the total cost for repairs, the work to be completed, the timetable for completion and any guarantees the contractor may have.
- Don’t sign paperwork with sections left blank. Someone can fill in information after you sign the paperwork.
- Don’t pay a contractor in full or sign that the work is complete until the work is actually completed.
- Be cautious of contractors with work vans/trucks that have out-of-state license plates and/or lack signs or insignias identifying the company name.

#### Need Help?

Whether you have a general question or want to file a complaint, you can get help from the Bureau of Consumer Assistance: online at [www.osi.state.nm.us](http://www.osi.state.nm.us) or call **855-427-5674**.

#### Homeowners Insurance FAQs

Q. Can an insurance company non-renew my homeowner policy because of the hail storm?

A. There are no laws that address this; however, if you have had multiple losses (including hail) an insurer may consider non-renewing the policy.

Q: Only one side of my house was damaged by the hail. Is the insurer required to match the other three sides and replace all of the siding?

A. There are no laws that require a company “match” the siding or paint for areas of the house that were not damaged. The company is only required to repair or replace the actual damages caused by the covered event.

**More information is available on the OSI website: [www.osi.state.nm.us](http://www.osi.state.nm.us)  
File a Consumer Complaint: [www.osi.state.nm.us/index.php/file-a-complaint](http://www.osi.state.nm.us/index.php/file-a-complaint)**