



**Contact:** Cassandra Coville  
(518) 432-4227 or (518) 312-3315

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **NEW YORK INSURANCE ASSOCIATION PROVIDES TIPS TO SPEED THE HOMEOWNERS CLAIMS SETTLEMENT PROCESS**

**NEW YORK, NY, May 21, 2008** — Homeowners insurance covers losses from fire, wind, accidental water damage, theft and vandalism. The New York Insurance Association (NYIA) offers tips to speed the insurance claims settlement process:

- Be prepared to give your agent or insurance company representative a description of the damage to your property. Your agent will report the loss immediately to your insurance company or to a qualified adjuster who will contact you as soon as possible in order to arrange an inspection of the damage. Make sure you give your agent a telephone number where you can be reached.
- Take photographs of the damaged areas. Visual documentation will help with the claims process and will assist the adjuster in the investigation.
- Prepare a detailed inventory of all damaged or destroyed personal property. Make two copies—one for yourself and one for the adjuster. Your list should be as complete as possible, including a description of the items, dates of purchase or approximate age, cost at time of purchase and estimated replacement cost.
- Collect canceled checks, invoices, receipts or other papers that will assist the adjuster in obtaining the value of the destroyed property.
- Make whatever temporary repairs you can. Cover broken windows, damaged roofs and walls to prevent further destruction. Save the receipts for any supplies and materials you purchase as your insurance company will reimburse you for reasonable expenses in making temporary repairs.
- Secure a detailed estimate for permanent repairs to your home from a reliable contractor and give it to the adjuster. The estimate should contain the proposed repairs, repair costs and replacement prices.
- If your home is severely damaged and you need to find other accommodations while repairs are being made, keep records of all expenses, such as hotel and restaurant receipts. Most homeowners insurance policies provide coverage for additional living expenses incurred by the loss of use of your home.

(more)

If you are unsatisfied with how your insurance company is handling your claim, you have several options:

- Let the agent know that you are dissatisfied and explain the specifics of your problem.
- Contact the claims manager of the company. Provide a written explanation of your problem with copies of supporting documentation. Remember to send only a copy and not any original documentation. If you are insured with a smaller company, consider writing directly to the president. Going to the top can sometimes speed the process.
- Contact the consumer services helpline of the New York Department of Insurance (800) 342-3736. Insurance is a regulated industry and your state department of insurance should be able to help you resolve your problem.
- Consult an attorney. If you have tried all four of the above tips and still can't resolve the claim, you may want to talk to an attorney. You may have to pay a consultation fee for your initial visit, so make sure you know how much this will cost. Meet with an attorney who has solid references or get the name of someone from your local bar association. Prepare for the visit by bringing a copy of your insurance policy and other relevant documents. Get the fee structure in writing before you decide to pursue the case.

Your insurance company provides an adjuster at no charge to you. These company-supplied adjusters are required to abide by state regulations on claims handling. Adjusters who have no relationship, known as public adjusters, with your insurance company and charge a fee for their services also may contact you. Keep in mind that:

- Public adjusters may charge you as much as 15 percent of the total value of your settlement for their services. The fee isn't covered by your insurance policy. Sometimes after a disaster, your state's insurance department sets the percentage that public adjusters may charge.
- If you decide to use a public adjuster, first check his or her qualifications by calling the New York Department of Insurance. Ask your agent, a lawyer or friends and associates for the name of a professional adjuster they can recommend. Avoid individuals who go from door-to-door after a major disaster, unless you are sure they are qualified.

The New York Insurance Association (NYIA<sup>®</sup>) is a state trade association that has represented the property and casualty insurance industry for over 125 years. For more information on NYIA, visit [www.nyia.org](http://www.nyia.org).