

# The Flood Claims Process



## Some things to keep in mind when going through the claims process:

- You will need to meet deadlines every step of the way, so work with your adjuster and your insurance company to stay informed and on track throughout the claims process.
- If you have a mortgage and receive money on the flood claim for your building/structure, your insurance company will issue the check to you and your lender, so ensure the current lender's name is correct on the policy to avoid delays in receiving payment. Your insurance company will mail the check to you but you will need to have your lender sign the check before you can deposit it. Contact your lender as soon as possible to confirm the process.
- You may be able to receive an advance payment for some of your flood damage before your adjuster evaluates the loss. Speak with your adjuster or insurance company to determine your options.
- If there is a Presidential Disaster Declaration for the event that caused flood damage to your property, you are encouraged to register with FEMA, in addition to filing your flood claim. NFIP insurance policies do not provide additional living expenses or temporary housing; however, FEMA disaster assistance may be available. It is important that you file for assistance as soon as possible.

### STEP 1

Report the loss to your insurance agent or your insurance company as soon as possible. Your insurance company will assign an adjuster and the adjuster will assist you with presenting the documentation and information to support your loss.

*TIMING: Your adjuster will usually contact you within 24 to 48 hours. The adjuster will coordinate with you to schedule a time to evaluate your flood damage. If you do not hear from your adjuster after one week, call your insurance company.*

### STEP 2

The adjuster inspects the property (flood damage evaluation and scoping visit) and should ask if you wish to request an advance payment from your insurance company. In some instances, your insurance company may choose to hire another expert such as an engineer to evaluate your damage. This might happen if you and the adjuster do not agree on the extent of the flood damage or how to repair it or if the adjuster is unable to determine the exact cause of the damage.

*TIMING: It is your responsibility to submit the signed and dated Proof of Loss document to your insurance company within 60 days of the date of the flood loss, unless FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program has issued a waiver for the flood event.*

### STEP 3

The adjuster will send you a detailed room-by-room unit-cost estimate of damage, review the estimate with you and provide you with the Proof of Loss document for signature. If you

agree with the adjuster's estimate, you will sign and date the Proof of Loss document acknowledging your agreement. Signing the Proof of Loss will not prevent you from seeking additional payment if needed, but it will allow your insurance company to issue a timely payment. You will still have the opportunity to work with your insurance company if you find additional flood damage or if you have a request for additional payment under your claim.

### STEP 4

The adjuster provides his report and recommendation for payment to your insurance company. If the insurance company agrees with the documentation, the insurance company should pay the amount you are requesting. If there is anything in the estimate that your policy does not cover, your insurance company will provide the adjuster with their recommendation, which may lead to a different payable amount and possibly a new Proof of Loss document. Your insurance company will issue payment for any undisputed amount and send you a written denial letter fully explaining the reasons for the denial of your claim or any portion of the claim.

*TIMING: The time frame for the adjustment is usually 45 to 60 days from the date of the inspection; however, this time may be longer depending on the size or circumstances of the flood event.*

### STEP 5

If you do not agree with the adjuster's estimate, you should work with him or her to determine a dollar amount for the covered loss that you both agree with. Consulting with your general contractor can be helpful.

## STEP 6

If you are unable to reach an agreement with the adjuster, you should contact a claims examiner within your insurance company to discuss the settlement offer or coverage concerns.

## STEP 7

If you are unable to reach an agreement with the claims examiner, within 60 days after the loss, you must submit a Proof of Loss, which is your statement of the amount you are claiming under the policy. You must also provide documentation for the total amount you are requesting (the undisputed amount plus any additional amount). Send the sworn proof of loss and documentation directly to the claims examiner.

**TIMING:** *You must submit your Proof of Loss document within 60 days after the date of the flood loss, unless FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program has issued a waiver for the flood event.*

## STEP 8

If your insurance company agrees with your documentation, they will pay the amount you are requesting; or they may provide the adjusting firm with their recommendation, which may lead to an additional payable amount and possibly a new Proof of Loss document. If the insurance company disagrees, they will issue payment for any undisputed amount and send you a letter fully explaining the reasons for the denial of the remaining portions of your claim.

## STEP 9

If you agree with the partial denial of your claim or no longer dispute the decision, the claim will close. You should contact your insurance company if you find additional flood damage or if you have a request for additional payment under your claim.

## STEP 10

If you choose to dispute some or all of what was denied in the denial letter, you have three options:

- You may submit an amended Proof of Loss with supporting documentation to the claims examiner;
- You may submit a formal Appeal to FEMA; or
- You may file a lawsuit against your insurance company

A lawsuit must be filed within one year of your insurance company's first written denial letter in the U.S. District Court where the property is located at the time of the loss.

However, once you file a lawsuit, you may no longer appeal your claim to FEMA or file an amended Proof of Loss with your insurance company.

Learn more about your options online, at [www.fema.gov/flood-claim-appeals-and-guidance](http://www.fema.gov/flood-claim-appeals-and-guidance).

**TIMING:** *You must submit your written Appeal to FEMA within 60 days of your insurance company's denial letter, along with a copy of the denial letter and the documentation you have to support your Appeal.*

## These resources may prove helpful as you recover from your flood loss:

- The NFIP Help Center provides general information about flood insurance, call **800-427-4661**.
- [Ask the Expert](#) provides answers to frequently asked questions about flood insurance.
- [The Office of the Flood Insurance Advocate](#) provides assistance with resolving flood insurance issues after all other NFIP resources have been unsuccessful.
- [Who's Knocking at Your Door?](#), explains the different types of official "visitors" who may come to inspect your disaster damage.
- [NFIP Guidelines](#) for cleaning up after a flood.
- [What to Do After a Flood](#) - A guide for NFIP Policyholders.
- [The Disaster Survivors Checklist](#) can help you navigate the NFIP flood claims process.
- [The Summary of Coverage](#) can help NFIP policyholders understand what is and isn't covered by their policy and how items are valued at the time of loss.
- [Things to Know about Substantial Damage](#), describes the process of determining if a structure has been substantially damaged.
- Learn about [Increased Cost of Compliance](#) and how it can help mitigate properties that are substantially or repetitively damaged by flooding.

