



FEMA

W-10017

March 4, 2010

MEMORANDUM FOR: Write Your Own (WYO) Company Principal Coordinators, the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) Servicing Agent, and Selected Adjusting Firms

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James A. Sadler".

FROM: James A. Sadler, CPCU, AIC
Director of Claims
National Flood Insurance Program
DHS/FEMA-MT-RN-CA

SUBJECT: Wind vs. Water – Adjusting Practice

In previous bulletins, FEMA discussed wind and flood investigative tips and a logical approach in addressing claims that involve both perils. Attached for your review are previous bulletins that address adjusting practices: WYO Bulletins W-08008, dated February 25, 2008 “Wind/Water Investigative Tips”; and W-08070, dated September 25, 2008 “Flood Insurance Claims Guidance.”

The following will not ask adjusters to do much more than they currently do when approaching any flood or wind damaged building. There is no requirement for the flood adjuster to estimate the wind damage.

When adjusting wind/water losses the, adjuster should use established and proven investigative methods when documenting flood and wind damage to buildings and/or contents occurring during hurricane or storm events. “Wind/Water Investigative Tips” can be helpful.

The adjuster is asked to record the process they always use when approaching a wind/water claim. In addition to looking for signs of flood damage and/or a General Condition of Flood and documenting the exterior water line, the adjusters should note any exterior wind damage, such as missing shingles, turbine or fascia damage. The adjuster should also photograph this damage and mention what was observed in the narrative report.

Remember, **the Standard Flood Insurance Policy (SFIP) Pays Only For Direct Physical Loss by or From Flood to Insured Property.** Once inside the building, the adjuster should always document the flood water line. Damage below this line is typically flood damage (exceptions like wicking should be noted in the narrative report). Damage above the flood water line is typically wind damage, such as water-stained ceilings or water damage at broken windows or exterior doors. This damage should also be photographed and mentioned in the narrative report.

Auditors of the NFIP have asked that adjusters explain their rationale or the adjuster's basis for identifying the separation of wind and water damage. Typically, this rationale is as simple as:

- Shingles damaged at the right front of roof;
- Interior water line three feet;
- Damage below the water line is caused by flood;
- Damage above the water line is caused by wind to include water-stained ceiling in the area of roof damage.

As this separation becomes narrower, the basis may be more detailed, but it should be kept concise. When the cause of damage overlaps, the basis must be clearly explained in the narrative report; otherwise, the adjuster may approach the insurer to request an engineer to provide a professional opinion on causation.

As always, any known unusual circumstances should be recorded in the narrative report.

Again, we ask for your full support. Any questions or comments regarding the wind verse water adjusting practices should be directed to James A. Sadler, CPCU, AIC, Director of Claims, National Flood Insurance Program. Mr. Sadler may be reached by email at James.Sadler@dhs.gov.

cc: Vendors, IBHS, FIPNC, Government Technical Representative

Suggested Routing: Claims, Training, Underwriting, Adjusting Firms, Independent Flood Adjusters

Attachments



FEMA

W-08008

February 25, 2008

MEMORANDUM TO: Write Your Own (WYO) Company Principal Coordinators
National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) Servicing Agent

FROM: 
James A. Sadler, CPCU, AIC
Director of Claims
National Flood Insurance Program

SUBJECT: *Wind/Water Investigative Tips*

Hurricanes and other severe storms may result in damage caused by both wind and flood. When handling these claims, adjusters should use proven investigative methods such as those provided in the attached document, which was adapted from the 1998 NFIP pamphlet, *Wind/Water Investigative Tips*. These tips will be included in the revised *NFIP Claims Adjuster Manual*, when published.

Attachment

cc: Vendors, IBHS, Government Technical Representative

Suggested Distribution: Claims Department, Adjusting Firms, Independent Adjusters, and Staff Adjusters Handling NFIP Claims

Wind/Water Investigative Tips

Important Things to Do When Investigating a Claim

- Research local newspapers and/or check with the local weather service, the U.S. Weather Bureau, or other agencies to determine the specific data relative to the storm.
- When damage is caused by a hurricane, tropical storm, nor'easter, or other event that may cause both wind and flood damage, determine and record the following (*check and record the timing and duration for each*):

<u>Data Element</u>	<u>Measurement</u>	<u>Timing</u>	<u>Duration</u>
Highest Wind Speed	_____	_____	_____
Barometric Pressure	_____	_____	_____
Amount of Rainfall	_____	_____	_____
Tidal Heights	_____	_____	_____
Storm Surge	_____	_____	_____
Wave Heights	_____	_____	_____

- Record the distance and direction of the insured risk relative to the eye of the storm. Remember that the waves are higher to the right of the storm's path.
- Research and record site conditions:
 - Original ground elevation
 - Distance from body of water
 - After-storm ground elevation or other indications of scour
 - Amount and type of storm debris
- Canvas the neighborhood for eye-witnesses and take their recorded or signed statements. Be certain to identify where each witness was at the time of the storm, the amounts or descriptions of wind and flood each witness saw, and the time of day that each saw it. Record in the claims files only what each witness actually says—not hearsay or your opinion.
- Check for and photograph the debris line. Measure and record how many feet the debris line is from the shoreline and from the insured risk. Be sure to describe the topography in detail.

- Check for and photograph houses and objects adjacent to the insured risk. If damage appears to be different from that of the insured risk, determine why and record the reason in the claim files. Usually, the damage is different for one of two reasons:
 - Different cause of damage (e.g., a tornado can cut a relatively narrow path, leaving neighboring buildings relatively undamaged).
 - Different building construction and anchoring. Look for connectors or tie-down straps for elevated buildings and enclosures beneath elevated buildings. Check the pilings for evidence of scouring. Photograph the remaining pilings, showing patterns of the leaning pilings. Determine how deep the pilings were installed and measure the distance between pilings.
- Determine and record in the claim file a complete description of the damaged or demolished building, including the type of construction; whether elevated (if elevated with an enclosure, be sure to indicate the type of enclosure – breakaway walls, open lattice work, vents, etc.); number of floors (including basement); roof covering and pitch; windows, carports, etc.; and the building's relative position to the wind. It is also important to include a description of the foundation type (slab, piles, piers, etc.) and damage.
- Photograph (close-up) the remains of connectors or tie-downs. Be sure to describe the size, type, brand, method of installation, and if possible the brand name.
- Make a notation in the initial report where evidence suggests the insured risk was not built as securely as neighboring buildings. The flood insurer or coastal plan, for example, may want to check the local building codes to determine if a building construction violation has occurred and document the claim files, both with copies of the code and the evidence of a violation. The age of the building and the effective dates of the building codes need to be documented.
- Check for and photograph any wind-caused openings in the building and/or missing roof shingles.
- Check for and photograph all possible wind-related water marks or stains visible on both the exterior and interior walls and ceilings of the building.
- Check for and photograph all possible flood-related water marks or stains visible on both the exterior and interior of the building.
- Check for and photograph any water marks visible on nearby trees or fence posts, or other buildings.

- Check for and photograph any uprooted trees or trees snapped off at a high level.
- Check for, photograph, and note in the claim files any evidence of severe erosion such as leaning pilings or houses “nosed down” in the ground. Leaning or bent pilings can occur both as a result of flooding and as a result of a building being pushed over by wind forces or blown off its pilings.

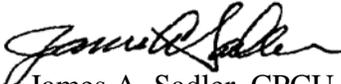


FEMA

W-08070

September 25, 2008

MEMORANDUM FOR: Write Your Own (WYO) Company Principal Coordinators,
Vendors, NFIP Servicing Agent, and Selected Adjusting Firms

FROM: 
James A. Sadler, CPCU, AIC
Director of Claims
National Flood Insurance Program
DHS/FEMA-MT-RN-CA

SUBJECT: Flood Insurance Claims Guidance

In areas affected by **both** Hurricane Gustav and Hurricane Ike, FEMA has learned of many instances in which a claim caused by Gustav could not be inspected prior to the arrival of Ike. Therefore, the following claims guidance is issued for the benefit of policyholders, claim adjusters, WYO companies, and the NFIP Servicing Agent.

1. Policyholders:

Should report all flood damage from either or both of the hurricanes to their carrier. Whether or not insured against flood, property owners and renters who need assistance in addition to or other than that provided by the NFIP should be referred to the Disaster Support Resources area of the FEMA Website at http://www.fema.gov/business/nfip/disaster_res.shtm.

2. Claim Adjusters:

- A. Must address prior losses, particularly from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.
- B. Where possible, should separate, itemize, and document the damages from each hurricane.
- C. Must recognize and avoid duplication of coverage and payment for overlapping damage from prior losses or Hurricanes Gustav and Ike.
- D. Should use proven investigative methods to document windstorm damage to building or contents. See WYO Bulletin W-08008, dated February 25, 2008, for a discussion of Wind/Water Investigative Tips.

In approaching a flood claim that may also include wind damage, an adjuster should continue to recognize any excluded damages. If there is wind and flood damage, the adjuster should comment on the rationale of his/her decision regarding the separation of wind and flood

damage. Most of the time this is simple – water line and below is flood; above the waterline is wind. However, when a building has been heavily damaged or destroyed by storm forces, an engineer may be needed to determine causation. Adjusters should photograph the wind damage generally. Photos of wind damage do not have to be exhaustive, unless necessary to document that flood damage is minor or absent.

3. WYO Companies and the NFIP Servicing Agent – Ike and Gustav Overlap:

- A. If damages resulting from Hurricane Ike exceed the Hurricane Gustav damages, and the combined damages do not exceed the policy limit of liability, the Hurricane Gustav claim should be closed without payment. All covered damage should be considered under the Hurricane Ike claim.
- B. If the covered damage from either event exceeds the policy limit of liability, the adjuster should, to the best of his/her ability, separate and document the damage.
- C. The policy limits reinstate after each occurrence.
- D. Each claim will be subject to the deductible(s) applicable in the policy.
- E. This guidance is applicable to both building and personal property losses.

4. Existing Guidance for Adjusters and Carriers:

- A. Coverage of Connected Heating Machinery – Heating machinery, in a building, connected to and servicing the insured building, is covered. Reminder: air conditioning compressors in the open, connected to and servicing the building, are covered.
- B. Replacement Cost Loss Settlement – When insured property is eligible for replacement cost loss settlement, there is no longer any requirement to hold back the recoverable depreciation.
- C. Water, Moisture, Mildew, or Mold Damage – When this damage occurs in connection with a covered direct physical loss by or from flood, it will be covered unless there is clear evidence of the policyholder's failure to inspect and maintain the insured property, where it was feasible to do so. If such damage is the result of wicking, it is covered.
- D. Determination of the Lowest Elevated Floor – Full coverage for Post-FIRM elevated buildings begins at the lowest elevated floor. This is the lowest floor raised above ground, even if the pilings extend beyond it.
- E. Repair Estimating and Pricing Guidelines – We expect that the repair estimate be based on current local prices and that the pricing guidelines are used with discretion and flexibility. Repair estimates and corresponding settlements are always to be adjusted in accordance with

special conditions of the Standard Flood Insurance Policy[?] (e.g., the requirement for repair or replacement with material of like kind and quality), local pricing, and actual costs as provided by the policyholder and the selected contractor.

- F. Unit Cost and File Documentation – We expect unit costs to include all materials, sales tax, disposable equipment, rented equipment, and any overhead of the contractor. Additionally, we expect estimated costs of personal property to include any delivery costs, setup fees, and sales tax. These are standard practices within the insurance industry. When actual documented costs for items of like kind and quality, such as repair invoices from service contractors, receipts, and replacement quotes differ from this standard practice, reasonable additional costs should be considered.

cc: IBHS, FIPNC, Government Technical Representative

Suggested Routing: Claims, Underwriting, Data Processing, Marketing