



TOWN OF INDIAN SHORES SPRING 2003- NEWSLETTER



Visit the Town's web site at: www.myindianshores.com
Our email address is: indshore@tampabay.rr.com

WHO NEEDS FLOOD INSURANCE?

When your home is flooded, it can lead to financial ruin if you do not have the proper insurance. In addition, a basic homeowner's policy will not cover your flood damage! You need flood insurance - a special policy backed by the federal government, with cooperation from local communities and private insurance companies.

About 200 insurance companies, possibly including the company that already handles your homeowners or auto insurance, write and service flood insurance policies for the government, which finances the program through premiums.

Although flood insurance is relatively inexpensive, most Americans neglect to purchase protection. Only about one-quarter of the homes in areas most vulnerable are insured against flood loss, according to the Federal Insurance Administration (FIA). In those areas, flooding is 26 times more likely to occur than a fire during the course of a typical 30-year mortgage.

More than 19,000 communities have agreed to stricter zoning and building measures to control floods, according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Residents in these communities are entitled to purchase flood insurance through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), a program FEMA oversees.



Purchasing Your Policy:

The average flood insurance premium in 2000 was \$353 a year. The average amount of flood insurance purchased in 2000 was \$129,089. Policies are available in three forms: "Dwelling" (most homes); "General Property" (apartments and businesses); and "Residential Condominium Building Association Policy" (condominiums). All have limits on coverage.

A Flood of Data

Wondering what type of policy you should buy and how much coverage you need? Do you simply need a good definition of a flood? The Federal Emergency Management Agency, which oversees the National Flood Insurance Program, answers these questions and more on its Web

site. To find out more about flood insurance policies, go to the following NFIP web site.
www.app1.fema.gov/nfip

In general, the policy does not take effect until 30 days after you purchase flood insurance. Therefore, if the weather forecast announces a flood alert for our area and you run to purchase coverage, it is already too late. You will not be insured if you buy a policy a few days before a flood.

Insurers and FEMA officials say the national flood insurance program works best for everyone when more people participate. This lowers rates, increases the pool of funds from which to draw in the event of a flood, and lessens the chance that claim payments will have to be taken from taxpayer funds.

Picking a company



Since the federal government sets the rates, private insurance companies that sell flood insurance compete for service, not on price. These "Write Your Own" companies make their profit from service fees allotted by the NFIP. When comparing insurers, one question to ask is how quickly are claims resolved. A company in poor financial health may not be able to pay its claims as promptly as a prosperous company. You can check the Standard & Poor's financial strength of companies through Insure.com's Insurance Company Guide.

When writing flood insurance policies, companies tend to focus on specific regions. Unisun, for example, provides coverage to homeowners from Virginia to Texas. Other major flood insurers, such as Bankers Insurance Group, write policies throughout the country, but are not considered national providers. State Farm, Allstate, Mutual of Omaha, and Travelers are examples of companies that write nationally. To find out which insurance companies sell flood insurance policies, visit the FEMA site.

SAFETY TIPS FOR HURRICANE SEASON:

Hurricanes are dangerous tropical cyclones. Their winds reach a constant speed of at least 74 mph, but may gust up to 200 mph. Hurricanes can cover several hundred miles, and can generate torrential rains and tornadoes. The eye of the hurricane is misleadingly calm; tricking people into thinking the storm is over. However, when the eye passes over your area, only half the storm has passed; the rest is yet to come. The wind will return suddenly from the opposite direction, perhaps with even greater force.

The most dangerous part of a hurricane is the storm surge, which has the greatest potential for hurricane-related deaths. This dome of water forms in the middle of the hurricane as it moves over the water, and can reach ten to 20 feet above normal sea level. At shoreline, this mountain of water, aided by huge breaking waves, acts like a bulldozer, razing everything in its path. It can knock down single-family homes and cause erosion under major buildings.



Heavy rains can flood low-lying areas. The six-month period from June 1st to November 30th is considered the Atlantic Hurricane Season.

This would be a good time to organize and evaluate your emergency supplies. Make sure you have enough for at least two weeks. You will also want to make certain your emergency equipment is in good working order. Obtain and store materials such as plywood and duct tape necessary to properly secure your home. Keep trees and shrubs trimmed. Cut weak branches and trees that could fall and bump against the house. Clear your yard of loose objects. Secure your boat, lash it to your trailer securely, let the air out of the trailer tires and secure trailer. If you keep your boat in a marina, check your contract; some require that you move it when a hurricane watch is issued. However, once a hurricane watch or warning has been issued, do not attempt to trim trees and shrubs. Trash pickup will be suspended, and your trash can become a dangerous missile in the storm's high winds. Review your insurance policy and keep a copy handy (in a watertight container) to take along should you have to evacuate. Decide where you will go if you must evacuate. Keep a checklist of prescription medications in your emergency plans.

If you need special consideration to evacuate (because of age, physical disability, medical needs, etc.) register with Pinellas County's Civil Defense and Office of Emergency Management in advance. Discuss emergency plans with your agency representative and your physician if you receive home health care or depend on electrical life-support equipment. Make arrangements with a hospital if necessary. In addition, high-rise apartments and condos are susceptible to conditions that may cause fires during high winds, when it is impossible to get emergency help. Hurricane winds are stronger at higher elevations, so be prepared to evacuate.

FLOOD SAFETY MEASURES

Keep the following safety measures in mind after a hurricane:

- Stay away from power lines and electrical wires. The number two flood killer after drowning is electrocution. Electrical current can travel through water. Report downed power lines to the Police Department (call 911).
- Be alert for gas leaks. Use a flashlight to inspect for damage. Don't smoke or use candles, lanterns, or open flames unless you know the gas has been turned off and the area has been ventilated.
- Carbon monoxide exhaust kills. Use a generator or other gasoline-powered machine outdoors.
- Clean everything that got wet. Floodwaters have picked up sewage and chemicals from storage buildings.

