



CONSUMER ALERT

Contact: Matt Swenson
(651) 296-6485
matt.swenson@state.mn.us

SUMMER STORM SEASON

Preparation, Response & Resources

May 23, 2011

Dear Friends:

This weekend, a series of severe storms hit portions of the northwest suburbs and southeast Minnesota. A tornado caused major damage to homes and businesses in North Minneapolis. Overnight, a massive tornado in Missouri claimed the lives of more than 100 people. And last month, a single storm created 173 tornadoes in one day, causing millions in damage and killing more than 300 people across the south.

Certainly, these are not the last storms we will see this season. That is why it is important that we act now to educate Minnesotans about insurance, so they are prepared before a disaster and know what their insurance does and does not cover following a storm. The more we do now to help Minnesotans, the better off our communities, neighborhoods, and businesses will be in the future.

Knowing that, we urge you to include the following information in your next newsletter to local residents:

There are many things in life we cannot control. But we can control our ability to prepare for storms by investing a little time in the next few weeks to get ready. That is why the Minnesota Department of Commerce has developed a [one-stop shop](#) to help Minnesota homeowners and businesses prepare for natural disasters.

Complete a Home Inventory

The Department of Commerce urges consumers to take inventory of their belongings ahead of the summer storm season. Research suggests that 48 percent of consumers do not have an inventory of their possessions. Of those who do, 32 percent have no photos and 58 percent have no receipts.

This [Home Inventory Checklist](#) walks consumers from room to room in their home, helping compile a list of their property. By completing the checklist, homeowners who file a claim or qualify for assistance will know what they had in their home that may need to be replaced. Consumers can also [download the free myHOME Scr.APP.book app](#) for iPhone® users by visiting the iTunes® App Store or searching 'NAIC' in the app store from their phone.

Information for Renters

If you rent and you don't have renter's insurance, you may want to consider purchasing coverage. Renter's insurance is relatively inexpensive and portable. The average renter's insurance policy costs between \$15 and \$30 per month. Renter's policies can cover everything from electronics to

(Upon request, this information will be made available in alternative format including, Braille, large print, audio tape, or computer disk)

Minnesota Department of Commerce

clothing to household appliances. Replacing all your possessions in the wake of a storm will cost much more.

Auto Coverage

Storms can damage autos in a number of ways: hail damage to the exterior and glass; wind driven debris damage; damage from fallen trees; and tornado damage. Coverage for these types of losses is provided by your policy under the *Comprehensive* portion of the auto policy. Some policies call this coverage *Other than Collision*. Ask your insurance agent how much coverage you have. For more information about auto insurance, click [here](#).

What to Do After a Storm

If a storm damages your property, follow these simple steps:

Be safe. Look out for downed power lines, etc. Do not try to go into an area until the official time is given.

Call your insurance company to report the damage. They will send out adjusters to review the damage and assess the loss. Take photos of the damage and remove personal property if your home cannot be secured. Do not dispose of property until an insurance adjuster has reviewed it for your claim. Many policies include reimbursement for storage costs incurred until your home is repaired.

Beware of storm-chasing contractors – Do not agree to a contract without checking their references and checking with the Department of Labor’s Residential Contractors Division at (651) 284-5069.

Call the Minnesota Department of Commerce. For questions regarding insurance call the Minnesota Department of Commerce Consumer Response Team at (651) 296-2488 or (800) 657-3602. You can also visit our website at www.insurance.mn.gov.

Thank you for your attention to this important consumer alert.

Mike Rothman
Commissioner
Minnesota Department of Commerce