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Idea Exchange

The Competitive Advantage

How to Help Policyholders After the Storm



By Jason Wolf

The active and devastating 2017 hurricane season is officially over, which means it's the perfect time to reflect on Hurricane Irma insurance claims. Claims are still being resolved from the storm that hit all parts of Florida in September, and agents are busy helping policyholders with their recovery. Here are some tips on how to simplify and keep customers informed on the claims process, now and after future storms.

Communicate With Your Policyholders

Remind them that the insurance industry is working overtime and has mobilized all hands on deck to deal with storm claims, with executives, managers and

all hands on deck to deal with storm claims, with executives, managers and even secretaries answering incoming calls from policyholders. The agent is typically the first avenue of contact - so reassure policyholders and remind them they are

ened rules to allow for instant payments such as debit cards for alternative lodging when homes are uninhabitable, for most people who are able to reside in their homes the wait will seem long. So stay in touch and remind them to be patient.

Encourage documentation

You may think homeowners are well aware that they should take pictures of the damage and of the repairs - the house, the yard, or the car after it is repaired. But not everyone remembers.

Work with the homeowner, who is probably very distressed. Tell them to get receipts; even if they pay cash to a guy in a truck to remove debris, urge them to get a written receipt. A written receipt on a piece of paper, with basic contact information, will go a long way in helping prove money spent on repairs.

Have policyholders gather everything. You probably tell your policyholders to have all of their documents in order, but let's be honest, not everyone has a folder full of important documents. Tell them to gather up what they can - home inspection reports, any receipts for any repair work they've done especially major repairs, roof

reports, any receipts for any repair work they've done especially major repairs, roof work, and other similar repairs. Whatever they can provide will help when it comes time to file the claim.



will go to the public adjuster.

Public adjusters will respond to this comment by suggesting that they can get the policyholder more than initially offered. But, nearly every insurance company has a standard procedure for insureds to come back for more money, provided it is truly needed.

Break things down

You are going to be bombarded with questions. Many policyholders will have the same questions, but answer every single one. Make sure insureds know past claims will not impact new claims. Let them know they can opt-in for more coverage if they think they have the wrong type of policy. Advise them on the difference between water and wind damage claims. In fact, they may not even realize that they

between water and wind damage claims. In fact, they may not even realize that they have a different insurance company for windstorm claims than they do for regular claims. Some even have separate companies for claims unrelated to wind.


not the only person with a claim, but are just as important as everyone else.

After Irma, there were a myriad of issues that were out of everyone's control. Many talented adjusters from around the country were mobilized to Houston for Hurricane Harvey and in Puerto Rico following Maria. Catastrophe adjusters, as they're known in the industry, are typically independent contractors who travel from disaster to disaster whenever the need arises; there is a finite quantity of qualified adjusters in this country. Although there are some loos-

Provide Common Sense

Homeowners who have watched any TV or listened to local radio have undoubtedly heard that a public adjuster can help. This can be true - but homeowners need to know that public adjusters take a percentage of the claim proceeds. It may need to be explained that if a policyholder has a claim because a hurricane damaged the house, and the insurance company processed the claim and finds that the homeowner is owed \$20,000 to restore the home to pre-loss condition, some of that money

Take a Deep Breath

You probably have a lot of clients who are looking for guidance. Be reassuring. Tell them if they are safe, dry and have any semblance of a routine, things will get done. Hurricanes have a lengthy recovery process and are a part of life. They are not alone - yes, you can say, we are all in this together. 

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