

Tips for Filing Insurance Claims

What if your company's building is vandalized or damaged by a storm or fire? After the initial shock, you know that as a policyowner, you need to file an insurance claim. But the time and effort you think it may take could cause you to procrastinate under these circumstances. Before an incident occurs, it is important to understand the terms of your insurance coverage and any obligations you may have to your insurer in the event that a claim must be filed. Refer to your policy's declarations page, and be sure to contact us with any questions concerning your coverage.

To help make the process of filing a claim go smoothly, familiarize yourself with your policy's claim instructions, and any steps you can take after experiencing a loss. Consider the following suggestions:

Contact Us Promptly

Immediate contact with your insurer is your first step in facilitating a speedy claim settlement after a covered loss. Make a report right after an incident occurs so that you can describe what happened while the details are still fresh in your mind. Always keep your insurance information handy when speaking with your insurer. Any theft, burglary, or auto accident should also be reported to the police immediately.

In the case of workers compensation claims, timely notification demonstrates your concern for your employees. Reporting claims immediately may also help you avoid late penalties and fines enforced in some jurisdictions.

Make an Effort to Mitigate Damages

Many people are unaware of their duty to mitigate, or lessen the severity of, any damages resulting from a covered incident. Doing so may help in the settlement of a claim. For example, if the siding on a building has come off and water is seeping in and damaging the property, the policyowner should attempt to control the seepage to help avoid *further* property damage. Or, if a vehicle's broken windshield is not covered during a storm, the vehicle owner may be unable to claim water damage to the vehicle's interior if he or she did not attempt to mitigate the damage.

Keep Documentation

Regardless of whether you are filing a claim for a broken lamp or a totaled vehicle, documentation can help build your case. Take photos or videos of any incurred damage at the time of the claim. If an accident or theft occurs, be sure to file a police report and retain a copy. If repairs to equipment are

urgently needed, save any damaged parts in case a claims adjuster needs to examine them.

Other important recordkeeping includes receipts and appraisals to help prove the value of your business property, should an item need to be replaced. However, simply having this documentation does not mean that a claimant will automatically be reimbursed for the replacement cost of an item. Coverage amounts may vary according to your particular policy, and in some cases, insurance may be based on depreciated value, which is discounted according to an item's age and condition.

When filing a business interruption insurance claim, it is important to have an accurate record of the income the business was generating both before and after the loss. Keep detailed information of business activity and of any extra expenses needed to sustain your business operations in a temporary location during the interruption period. If you are forced to close down for a period of time as the result of a covered loss, you should also be able to identify any expenses that continue during the time the business is closed, such as salaries of key personnel, advertising, and the cost of utilities, which are ordinarily covered as a part of the business interruption insurance protection.

Stay Calm

Regardless of the advice available on handling an insurance claim, experiencing a loss and sorting out the details can be overwhelming. Remember that there is a certain degree of inconvenience involved. However, by following these tips, your claim may be settled more quickly and more efficiently. If you need help, we are ready to assist you in filing your claim.

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