

# Why flood victims need to file insurance claims quickly

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If you were affected by the Kerala floods, you may be busy putting back your life in order now that the floods are receding. But it's also important to assess the damages to your assets and file your insurance claim soon to avoid rejection due to delayed filing. Though the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (Irdai) has asked insurers to expedite the settlement of claims with minimal paperwork, it is only wise to approach your insurer before it gets too late.

"Claims reported immediately receive priority on account of special arrangements made by the insurers and repairers in terms of deployment of additional resources and spares," said Amitabh Jain, head of motor and health, underwriting and claims, ICICI Lombard General Insurance Co. Ltd.

### WHY YOU SHOULD MOVE FAST

In case of a natural calamity like floods, eligible claims should be notified to the insurer at the earliest because a delay could mean further consequential damage allowing the insurer to deny payment,



explained Navin Chandani, chief business development officer, BankBazaar.com.

In fact, when calamities like floods occur, most insurance companies send advisory messages and it's important to take note of the instructions to avoid further damage to your assets. For instance, if your vehicle is submerged in water do not try to clank or push start the engine. Also, don't turn the ignition on once the water has receded because it could result in a short circuit in the electrical system. Instead, inform your insurer and let it tow the vehicle and examine the damage. "Motor policy terms and conditions prescribe for immediate intimation of a claim. It should be noted that

intimation to an insurer does not require documents to be presented," said Jain.

It is also helpful to take pictures of your property once the damage has occurred. "This instils a sense of trust in the insurer and increases the chances of your claim getting processed," said Chandani. He added that waiting for more than three days to inform the insurer makes it difficult for the insurer to fully trust the policyholder because there is a possibility of extended damage that may have happened in the interim.

The more you delay the more you expose yourself to the risk of rejection of an insurance claim. Most policy documents usually mention the notice of claim and a delay beyond that gives the insurer an upper hand to decide whether or not to approve the claim.

**A delay in filing claim could mean further consequential damage allowing the insurer to deny payment**

### IN CASE OF DELAY

In case you were unable to file the claim and there has already been a delay, inform the insurer about the reason for delay. "The policyholder can call us or write to us and confirm the reason for delay. If it is

a genuine claim, we ensure that all measures are taken and we process it within the best turnaround time," said Ashish Mehrotra, managing director and chief executive officer, Max Bupa Health Insurance Co. Ltd.

Sasikumar Adidamu, chief technical officer, Bajaj Allianz General Insurance Co. Ltd, said that as long as the delay in filing claims is within a reasonable time frame and if the delay is justified with a proper reason, the company would process the claims. He added that the company is flexible with timelines during times of massive destruction caused by, say, a flood.

Also, the insurance regulator has instructed insurers to not deny genuine claims on grounds of delay alone.

Claims could also get rejected if your policy does not cover the type of damage that has occurred. Read your policy documents carefully to understand what it includes before filing the claim.

On an average, insurers are receiving 5-10 claims from Kerala every day, said Mehrotra. Meanwhile, insurance companies are expecting the regulator to soon announce a timeline for them to settle the claims of flood-affected victims of Kerala.