

# Agency Catastrophe Guide

Developed by the Florida Association of Insurance Agents  
& Graciously Shared with IIABL for Adaptation



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# IIABL'S STATEWIDE PLAN

## IIABL's Statewide Plan

IIABL developed this plan, which is designed to coordinate and assist agents in their response to catastrophic events. IIABL members act as insurance liaisons for emergency operations directors and assist in recovery operations.

The following plan of action will come into play when a tropical storm or hurricane is within three days of landfall in Louisiana.

### THREE OR MORE DAYS BEFORE THE STORM

IIABL staff will contact IIABL member agencies to be sure they are aware of the impending storm and urge them to implement their agency catastrophe plan.

Agencies should review their catastrophe plan with agency staff to make sure that all appropriate precautions are taken and staff is prepared to deal with any catastrophe.

If an agency has not yet acquired disaster supplies, immediate action should be taken, to obtain:

- power generators
- gas
- cash
- bottled water
- ice
- nonperishable food
- paper copies of loss claims forms

### TWO DAYS BEFORE THE STORM

IIABL will post updated [catastrophe resources](#) on the IIABL website including agency resources, government resources, and insurance company claims reporting telephone numbers.

### ONE DAY BEFORE THE STORM

IIABL will send news releases to media in areas of anticipated storm impact, providing them with suggestions for storm response and claims reporting.

### AFTER THE STORM

IIABL will provide information and resources to member agencies and work with government offices including the Louisiana Department of Insurance to assist with the catastrophe response.

# DEVELOPING AN AGENCY DISASTER PLAN

## Developing an Agency Disaster Plan

*The following is adapted from The Agents Council for Technology report, "Key Considerations in Disaster Planning & Management"*

- Have a staff team develop a disaster plan that assigns roles to each staff member. The plan should contain the specific triggers that when met, will begin the plan's implementation. Each team handling an aspect of the disaster plan should have a point person who reports to the agency's president/CEO.
- The plan can be reinforced regularly in staff meetings, and the staff can brainstorm regarding possible disasters and the steps that should be taken in each situation. The plan should be reviewed and updated at least annually. When a staff member leaves the agency's employ, his/her duties under the disaster plan need to be reassigned.
- Prepare a list of employees and their contact information.
- Develop a phone tree system to contact all employees before and after the disaster. Document this and make sure all employees know their role. Update your call list and telephone numbers frequently.
- The disaster plan should spell out specifically where the agency or brokerage firm will turn for help to get each aspect of the business operations back up and running. Investigate what services are available to assist with disaster planning, as well as dealing with the aftermath of an event, such as the user groups, vendors, associations, or computer consultants.
- A hard copy of the disaster plan, including the employee list and carrier, vendor and emergency numbers and contact information should be kept in a designated place in the agency known by all employees, in case a disaster occurs and the information cannot be accessed electronically. You may also want each employee to have a hard copy of the disaster plan at home.
- Different aspects of the disaster plan should be tested and practiced regularly.
- The plan should foresee that when the disaster occurs, the agency or brokerage firm will not be dealing in an environment where some or all of the existing services continue to be available. Plan to be flexible and ready to adapt to the unique situation the disaster is likely to create for you.
- Make a list of all active clients, which should include active policies with the policy number, billing and issuing company, and expiration date of policy. You may also find it helpful to have an expiration list of policies to be processed for the next six months.
- Make a list of all vendors that can help you get your computers, software, phone systems, phone and Internet lines, and any other systems and equipment up and going again after a

# DEVELOPING AN AGENCY DISASTER PLAN

disaster. It is critical that special steps be taken to protect the security of vital agency information that is taken off-site.

- Consider whether an automated outward bound calling service, using “Reverse 911” technology, might provide your agency with another tool to communicate a specific message to your policyholders. If you plan to use such a service, set up the database and the likely script for the message in advance.
- Have a contingency plan to access additional staff resources to relieve your regular staff during a disaster because typically the normal agency workload dramatically increases when dealing with a disaster situation.
- Consider a financial disaster reserve to deal with the added costs the agency may encounter as well as the possible losses due to business interruptions.
- Find out if insurance companies with which you do business will provide the agency with drafting authority for claims if not already permitted under the agency appointment agreement, and if so, set up the workflows for that processing, and include it as a part of the plan.

# AGENCY PLANT ASSESSMENT

## Agency Physical Plant Assessment

Assess the physical characteristics of the agency building or office before disaster strikes so you are prepared to serve clients in the days that follow.

- Assess the physical characteristics of the agency building or office.
- Identify areas most vulnerable, and least vulnerable, to damage from a hurricane (wind, rain, rising water).
- Determine steps to minimize damage, such as: pre-cut plywood sections for windows, sandbags around doorways, moving equipment to interior portions of the office, etc.
- Identify which items of equipment, furniture, records, and supplies could be moved to safer portions of the office, or to off-premises locations.
- Consider the need to elevate certain items off the floor if rising water is a serious threat. Procure the equipment needed, such as blocks of wood or concrete blocks. Smaller items can be stored on desks, or in rest rooms (which are usually interior, windowless rooms).
- Be prepared to secure all files, manuals, and records. Tape cabinets and drawers shut.
- Cover all equipment, furniture, file cabinets, and storage containers for records with plastic (such as visqueen or garbage bags), and tape tightly.
- Before hurricane season, identify promising sites, and make contact with the owner or leasing agent, so that final arrangements can be made in short order after a storm if the need arises.
- Before leaving, unplug all electrical items.

## Prepare and Protect Technology

### PROTECTING AGENCY DATA AND SYSTEMS

- The agency's most current data should to be backed up and stored off-site in a secure way, and you must be able to access it from off-site. Contact your agency management system vendor to see what it can do to make sure you have access to your management system remotely after a disaster (such as on a secure website).
- Make sure your staff are assigned passwords and are trained on accessing policyholder information remotely from this off-site source.
- Some off-site sources will perform authorized functions for the agency, if the agency is unable to access its systems locally. These contingency arrangements should be established in advance so that the appropriate agreements can be put in place, covering such things as scope of the third party's authority to act on the agent's behalf, agency notification before certain actions are taken, and the privacy and security protections the third party will employ to safeguard client and agency information.
- If possible, load your management system on one or more office laptops since these are easier to power up or recharge than a desktop.
- Consider a relationship with a technology firm that has the capability to provide the agency with emergency services, such as a help desk, on-site assistance and equipment to help the agency get back up and running after a disaster.
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# PREPARE AND PROTECT TECHNOLOGY

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## PROTECTING INTERNET ACCESS AND EQUIPMENT

- If you use an application service provider over the Internet, find out what they can do for you in the event you have no Internet connection.
- If resources allow it, consider having a redundant Internet connection. For example, if you use DSL, get satellite, cable, or an Internet wireless service.
- Have a UPS (uninterruptible power supply) on all equipment. This not only allows a controlled shutdown, but it also affords a conditioned electrical circuit when power is restored or you use a generator. Never connect a computer directly to a generator due to the power fluctuations.
- Consider a UPS with a power rating that is able to provide continuous power to a workstation for a minimum of 15 minutes, and the servers for a minimum of 30 minutes. This will allow for enough time to properly close all open files and properly turn off the systems, preventing data loss or corruption. Note: Most UPS systems come with software and cables that allow for the automatic closing of files, applications, and the powering off of the workstation/server, if power is lost for a period of time.
- UPS units should be tested at least quarterly. This is best performed when the workstations and servers are idle and not being accessed, and allows enough time for the UPS to recharge (end of business day or weekends). Remove the UPS input power plug from the electrical socket, and record the total time that it takes for the UPS to quit supplying output power to the workstation/server. If the total time is not within your expectations, replace the UPS batteries or entire unit.

## ENSURE ACCESS TO POWER

Purchase a generator that can run all mission critical equipment. Look into whole office generators. An alternative approach is to contract with a firm that will drop off and activate a generator in the event of a loss of power. The agency should have a high confidence that the firm will perform before taking this approach.

### *Considerations for purchasing a generator*

- Size needed (kilowatt-hour power)
- Type: plug-in vs. hardwired



# PREPARE AND PROTECT TECHNOLOGY

- Fuel type (gas, diesel, natural gas)
- Rate of fuel usage
- Fuel storage/availability
- Maintenance supplies for extended use (engine oil, etc...)
- Security for the generator at night
- Back feed (generated electricity goes back into the feeder lines, endangering line crews)

Test the generator and check the oil and fuel levels according to the directions, and at least on a quarterly scheduled basis. Make sure to test the generator under an electrical load to assure that it is producing electricity (rather than just running the motor).

Make sure the generator is located out of the building and away from windows and doors, since fumes and carbon monoxide can be lethal. Also consider the impact of severe wind and rain on the generator.

## ALTERNATE COMMUNICATIONS

- Understand the phone company's restoration procedures to give priority to businesses such as insurance agencies because of their vital role in handling claims for the public. Note: Depending on the outage, it's not always a matter of being on the priority list. From a safety standpoint, the phone company may have to restore certain service first to avoid dangerous spikes in power or more outages.
- If there is a risk that your phone system can lose programmed data, follow the recommended back-up procedures for the system and store the back-up in a safe offsite location, as well as on-site location.
- Know in advance how to switch your incoming telephone calls to another line both at the switch in our office and via your telecommunications provider remotely (in case your office is without power or your staff is unable to get into the office).
- Consider having an alternative telephone answering service such as a call center, a branch location (far enough away so as not to be likely to suffer the same disaster), etc.
- A remote phone call center service could handle the agency's calls after hours as well as during emergencies. In many cases, these vendors have access to the agency's data to answer questions and can provide referrals to carrier claims centers, if so authorized by the agency.
- Cell phones may not be a reliable alternative system, given that the sheer volume of cell calls following the disaster may overwhelm the system or the cell towers may be down because of the disaster.

## PREPARE AND PROTECT TECHNOLOGY

- Make sure those handling your calls have been given appropriate scripts and have the most up-to-date carrier claim phone numbers. Have an escalation procedure for when specific agency personnel should be contacted to respond.
- Buy some inexpensive phones that you could use to bypass your phone system's master PBX in the event you get phone service before electric service. You should route an alternative phone line from where it enters the building directly to a phone jack, to which a simple phone set can be attached.
- Have the vendor who installed your phone system develop a crossover for your regular phones to an alternative phone line. Document and test it.

# AGENCY PERSONNEL PLAN

## Agency Personnel Plan

### CLAIMS INFORMATION FOR NON-CLAIMS STAFF

Orient the non-claims staff to the most frequently asked questions following a catastrophe. The following list of topics should be reviewed with the people who don't normally handle claims. Each agency should expand or change items on the list as the situation warrants.

- **Temporary Repairs:** If the damage is considered a covered loss (be careful of flood/rising water exclusion), nearly all policies pay for temporary repairs to protect insured property from further damage. Keep all receipts.
- **Debris Removal:** Removal of debris following a covered loss (be careful of flood/rising water exclusion) is covered, with certain dollar limits tied to the amount of insurance. Trees, at least, will be moved from the house into the yard, or may even be removed from the premises completely, under certain homeowner policies and under certain conditions. (For example: ISO policies cover removal of trees if they are downed by a covered peril and damage a covered structure; trees merely blown down in the yard are not generally covered as property, or eligible for debris removal.)
- **Additional Living Expenses:** Reasonable expenses are covered if the residence is made uninhabitable by direct damage from a covered peril. In the event of an evacuation ordered by a civil authority following damage in the area, additional living expenses are covered for up to two weeks. Keep receipts.

### TEMPORARY WORKERS & VOLUNTEERS

Develop and maintain a list of people available for temporary work. Contact people on the list prior to a hurricane and arrange for their transportation to your office. Part-time employment agencies are sometimes consulted for temporary help; however, former employees who are willing to work a week or two in an emergency situation are excellent for this job, as are relatives of current employees. The list should include each person's name, address, telephone number and current place of employment.

Consider preparing job descriptions for volunteers before the catastrophe to cut down on the chaos.

# AGENCY PERSONNEL PLAN

## SAMPLE JOB DESCRIPTIONS

### **Communications/Volunteer Coordinator**

Helps customers who have a problem with their claim, need to drop off information for their adjuster, or need to set up an appointment with a company representative or adjuster. Directs the work of other temporary or volunteer employees. Helps resolve problems and conflicts.

### **Personal/Commercial CSR assistant**

- Assist CSR with claims files, suspense items, mail, attachments, certificates, etc.
- Reconstruct files if needed.
- Take first reports.
- Supervise donations by directing traffic to the storage room and organizing supplies.
- Relieve CSRs so they can attend to personal matters at home.
- Assist company representatives in issuing drafts.

### **Front Desk/Receptionist**

- Greet customers as they arrive and place them on the appropriate waiting list.
- Maintain a positive, cheerful attitude and help create a sense of calm by acting professional at all times.
- Prepare waiting lists as follows:
  1. **First reports:** for customers who need to report their claim for the first time.
  2. **Agency drafts:** for customers who have already made their first report and need to see an agency claims representative for emergency money.
  3. **Company drafts or problems:** This waiting list will be based on which companies are physically in the building and writing advance checks. This will be determined at the time, and not all companies will be there at the same time. If the company is onsite writing drafts, do not place insured on the waiting list for company drafts; put the insured on the appropriate company waitinglist.

### **Runner/General**

- Retrieve and return customer files.
- Copy declaration pages.
- Deliver messages.

### **Front Desk Runner**

- Assist front desk personnel in directing customers where to go for appropriate services.

# AGENCY PERSONNEL PLAN

- Take customers to the claims-taking area and turn them over to the claims representative.
- Direct customers to appropriate company offices.
- Always return to the front desk and await instructions.

## **Claims First Report Runner**

- Get the customer file from the appropriate CSR's office, copy the declaration page(s) of the policy, and give the file to the representative taking the claim.
- Once the claims representative is done with the file, take the file back to the office from which you took it. Check the customer list on the CSR's door to make sure you have the right office, and then place the file in the Return Box for the CSR to file back.
- Return to the claims-taking area for your next assignment.

## **Claims checks runner**

- Responsible for going to the front desk to get the first customer on the list. Cross that customer off the list and take them to the claims representative.
- Retrieve insureds files, in which case you will go to the appropriate CSR's office and get the file from the "Return Box" or from the filing cabinet and bring it to the claims representative issuing the draft.
- Take files back to the appropriate CSR's office and place in the Return Box.
- Return to the front desk and get the next person on the waiting list.

## **Company runner**

- Assist company representatives.
- Look on the appropriate company log at the front desk, then take the first person on the list and cross the name off. Take that customer to the appropriate company representative.
- Pull the customer files. Go to the appropriate CSR's office, pull the file from the cabinet or Return Box and take it to the company representative.
- Return the file to the appropriate CSR's office, checking the customer list on the door to make sure you are returning to the right office. Place file in Return Box.
- Return to company representative for further instructions.

## **Communications runner**

- Help expedite communications taking cues from communications center coordinator.

# PREPARING FOR AND MANAGING CLAIMS

## Preparing For and Managing Claims

The Catastrophe Task Force recommends that agencies organize all specific company loss data that will be needed during a catastrophe before the storm hits.

Each company has different claims information and catastrophe requirements. After a catastrophe, agents probably will have additional personnel handling claims and dealing with various carriers. The Insurance Company Special Catastrophe Information form (see Appendix) will help organize this data and make it easy to disseminate to the appropriate persons. In the absence of company instructions, use the same adjuster for catastrophes as you would for normal losses.

An Insurance Company Special Catastrophe Information form should be completed for each carrier prior to any catastrophe. Notice the section on restrictions on binding authority. Most companies have certain restrictions on binding authority when a hurricane is approaching. Most suspend such authority altogether, some base those suspensions on distance of the storm from the coast in miles, and others refer to latitude and longitude. In some cases, pre-hurricane depressions, tropical storms and waves are the determining factors. From an E&O standpoint, it is important for every employee to be familiar with this information prior to hurricane season.

Use a storm tacking chart (see Appendix) to indicate the point where binding authority is suspended for each individual carrier. This allows the agency to predict, for example, that if the hurricane continues at its current speed, binding authority for ABC Company will be suspended around 3:00 p.m. Wednesday. If circulated to all employees, this could reduce greatly the chances of an E&O claim as a result of issuing a binder when authority to do so has been suspended.

### POST-STORM CLAIMS HANDLING

**First things first:** Get company claim numbers to insureds (ideally, this should have been done before the storm!). Post company claim and fax numbers on your agency's website, on social media, even on your agency's front door, and remind your insureds that claim service is available 24-hours a day.

Since Hurricane Andrew, the responsibility for reporting claims has shifted from the agency to the company. This does not mean that all claims will be processed directly to the company. The agency will still have many insureds who will contact them directly and expect to report the loss as they have in the past. Still, with power outages and the loss of phone lines, it may be more practical to have the insured contact the company directly.

# PREPARING FOR AND MANAGING CLAIMS

Many insureds will visit your office, particularly if local phone service is down. This can and will cause a great deal of disruption to the office. If the agency can convey the message that all claims will be handled on a priority basis with the most serious claim handled first, it will ease tensions. This message should also be distributed to the local media with a request for the public to remain calm and patient.

## LOSS REPORTING

If your carrier requires you to do loss reporting, be certain each Notice of Loss form is properly completed. Check each loss notice for completeness and accuracy before sending. One individual should be given the responsibility for checking each form and the authority to follow up with others to see that it is properly completed.

In completing the ACORD form, attention to detail is important. Show all coverages and form numbers. Be sure to include edition dates and all endorsement numbers. Many companies are using unrevised forms, and independent adjusters won't necessarily know which companies are using which forms.

If it is necessary to request emergency handling by the adjuster, make sure there is an accurate explanation of why such action is necessary. For example, if an agent has a sincere and true hardship case, the ACORD form should be noted "hardship case," with an explanation attached. Use discretion and only request emergency handling when necessary.

Prior to submitting, the person checking the loss forms should confirm each of the following:

- All copies are legible
- If not typed, print forms are completed in ball point pen
- The policy number is complete, including prefix, symbols, suffix, etc.
- The name appears on the loss notice as it does on the policy
- The description section provides as much detail as possible

If the loss involves some special company policy, a copy of the contract and copies of all pertinent forms are attached.

## SET UP A SEPARATE CLAIMS FILE

A separate file for catastrophe claims could prove to be of great value in following up on loss reports and in tabulating loss experience. Retain three copies of the ACORD Notice of Loss form (see example in Appendix) for the agency.

# PREPARING FOR AND MANAGING CLAIMS

Original—To carrier

Copy No. 1—Catastrophe loss file

Copy No. 2—Insured's file

Copy No. 3—Suspense for follow-up at a later date

An agency may find it necessary to substantiate those claims related to the catastrophe for company loss and contingency purposes. Agency agreements vary by carrier, but many will include a stop loss for single occurrences in determining agency profitability.

Even in the absence of such an arrangement, the agency should document those claims resulting from a catastrophe for future company negotiations and relations. The Catastrophe Claims Log (see Appendix) may be used for this purpose. Maintain a separate claims log for each carrier.

## FIRST REPORT OF LOSS

Upon first contact with the insured, take the time to explain any deductible clauses and ask the insured to arrange for any repairs necessary to protect the property. Point out that the reasonable cost of such repairs may be included in her claim.

The IIABL Catastrophe Task Force recommends that agents not be involved in recommending contractors or repair shops. Most shops are going to have more business that they can handle and problems with scheduling or repairs will only cause future involvement by the agents. However, we recognize that some agents may want to provide the information to the insured. Insureds should be cautioned about hiring unlicensed or uninsured contractors and advised to check with the Better Business Bureau before accepting services from unknown contractors or repair shops.

Explain to each claimant how losses will be adjusted and that there may be delays. If each client who reports a claim understands there are thousands of losses involved and the most seriously damaged property should and will have priority treatment, he or she will be less likely to be angry or complain if a delay occurs.

If a mortgage or loss payable clause applies, the loss draft will also include the name of the appropriate party. FHA regulations require inspection of the property before repairs are made in excess of \$1,000. In some instances (extreme damage), this may be required under any type of mortgage. In almost all cases, the mortgagee will require inspection of repairs before endorsement of the draft. To avoid confusion and misunderstandings, advise your insureds of this and tell them to contact the mortgagee if they have questions.



# PREPARING FOR AND MANAGING CLAIMS

If damage to personal property is involved, each insured should be advised to request a separate draft for payment so proceeds won't be held up by a mortgage requirement on building damage.

Providing as much information as possible to the insured about reporting a loss and explaining the claim process, in the long run, will save time.

One method used to expedite the catastrophe claims process is the Agent's Memo of Loss form (see Appendix). Use of a standard memo of loss is important during the heavy workload and confusion following a catastrophe. The memo of loss may be used according to individual agency needs, and can be used to take claims over the phone. One or two individuals should be available to complete the ACORD forms using the loss memo and the insureds file.

Mail a follow-up letter to the insured with each loss report

Often, in the wake of a hurricane, losses are overwhelming. The insured, though he has reported the loss to the agent and received courteous treatment, is still not certain that his particular claim has not become lost in the shuffle. A follow-up letter from the agency reassures the customer and provides a written review of the procedures outlined in the telephone conversation. (See sample letter to insureds in the Appendix).

# WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

## Working with the Media

After the media finish describing the destruction wrought by a catastrophe and its impact on the residents and the businesses in the area, they will ask, “What will be done to restore things as they were?”

That’s when reporters begin searching for insurance sources. The reporters involved may never have produced an insurance story before, and, therefore have no established contacts.

These reporters face obstacles trying to write a good catastrophe story under deadline pressure. They have to find a qualified, competent and articulate source, they may not know what questions to ask, and they must ensure the source is credible.

### Industry Response

Several groups, including IIABL, the Louisiana Department of Insurance, and the Insurance Information Institute, act as statewide insurance sources for Louisiana media outlets. These groups are in contact with one another prior to a hurricane strike or following any catastrophe. They share information and coordinate their activities.

Fundamentally, it is their task to work with the media so agents can attend to the needs of their clients. The media already will have received news releases explaining catastrophe coverages and procedures. When a hurricane is on its way, they will get additional material. And when the storm has done its damage, these groups will coordinate with the media.

The main reason for this type of centralized response is uniformity. It frustrates and impedes the media to have varying numbers or conflicting advice floating around. It’s also poor industry public relations to swamp the media with uncoordinated calls from the industry.

Nevertheless, agents will be called. Industry news releases may not have gotten to the reporter assigned the story, and local media want local sources, and properly so. A local agent can provide important perspectives on what’s happening.

### Questions Reporters Could Ask

- Where are emergency claim centers?
- Who should be called?
- How must property be protected from further damage?
- What records will be needed?

Even if the reporter doesn’t ask for the information, make sure you communicate the importance of remaining calm and patience. Assure the reporter that insureds claims will be handled fairly

# WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

and as quickly as possible. Information such as websites for claim information and telephone numbers should be included in all media releases.

## TIPS FOR WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

There are no hard and fast rules for talking with reporters. The reporter and situation will vary enough to create multiple exceptions to nearly all rules. Here are a few tips, however:

- Be honest and direct. Reporters are genuinely appreciative of those who help them prepare a good story.
- If you won't know the answer to a question, say so. Don't try to fudge if you are not 100 percent certain.
- Agents should not try to sell a reporter on their points of view. Help the reporter get his/her story.
- Remember and respect the reporter's deadline.
- Treat each reporter as an individual. Bad experiences with other journalists don't count. Media relations are "win some, lose some" propositions.

Some reporters will be new to insurance coverage and may not know what questions to ask, or ask the right questions. That's a wonderful time to be helpful. Try to learn what the reporter's assignment is and explain the insurance angles that might fit.

# AGENCY OFFICE CHECKLIST

## Agency Office Checklist

Here is a list of items agencies should have on-hand before disaster strikes.

### **Emergency Supplies and Equipment**

- Adequate supply of medication (for each staff person)
- Alternate supply source (such as generator)
- Anti-itch cream
- Batteries (AA, AAA, C, and Ds) and bulbs
- Bottled water, instant coffee, sweetener, non-dairy creamer, tea, juice, soft drinks
- Bug spray
- Candles
- Cans of "Fix-a-flat"
- City maps (for adjusters)
- Coolers
- Crank or battery-operated radio
- Diapers/related supplies
- Duct tape and/or other heavy duty tape
- Eating utensils
- Extension cords (regular and phone cords and couplers)
- Fans
- Fire extinguisher
- First-aid kit
- Flashlights
- Gas/fuel for generators and lanterns (of not battery operated)
- Lanterns
- Hand sanitizer
- Manual can opener
- Manual phones that require no power to operate
- Matches/lighters
- Non-perishable food (canned, dried, etc.)
- Pain reliever (aspirin/acetaminophen, etc.)
- Paper products such as plates/bowls/cups, towels/napkins, and toilet paper

# AGENCY OFFICE CHECKLIST

- Personal hygiene supplies
- Plastic/Visqueen
- Small desk lamps and spare bulbs
- Snacks foods (non-perishable such as granola bars, nuts, raisins, pretzels, dried fruit, peanut butter, crackers, etc.)
- Stress-relieving medications (Mylanta, Pepto, Alka Seltzer, Tums, etc.)
- Trash bags
- Wet wipes

## Office Supplies

- Staples
- Tape
- Pens
- Stamps
- File folders
- Claims supplies
- ACORD Notice of Loss forms
- Agent Memo of Loss
- Sample Coverage Forms (for adjusters)
- Notice of Loss acknowledgement cards

## A SPECIAL NOTE ABOUT CASH

Post disaster, the agency will need a supply of cash with which to purchase necessary items for continued operations, because it's likely that some banks will be closed and many ATMs will be out of service in the days following the storm.

Cash will need to be available for the staff, also. They will be buying gas, food, and other necessities, in order to keep themselves and their families going while they put in long hours at the agency.

**Cash flow to the agency may virtually stop for several weeks, if not longer. New business will probably be reduced to a trickle. Be prepared.**

# BEFORE YOU LEAVE THE OFFICE ...

## Before you leave the office ...

So you've created a plan, put it in place, and you and your staff are now making plans to batten down the hatches at home. Good for you! But before you leave the office, gather your staff and ask the following questions. *Answers to all should be "yes."*

1. Are all permissible binders entered and submitted to the company?
2. Are all permissible policies entered and submitted to the company?
3. Do you have a list of records you were working on to pull after the hurricane reporting is done?
4. Are all desks, tables, etc., cleared?
5. Are all kitchen supplies adequate?
6. Have arrangements been made for personnel to get to the office, and are they aware of alternate routes to the office if the main arteries are blocked?
7. Is the receptionist informed as to the routing of calls upon returning to the office?
8. Are all necessary claims forms in order and easily accessible? (Print out forms that you're used to filing electronically or that require a computer to complete.)
9. Has every measure been taken to protect the agency against damage?
10. Are all personnel informed as to their duties when they return?

*(add other items that may be specific to your workplace)*

## Appendix

ACORD Property Loss Notice

Agent's Memo of Loss

Atlantic Basin Hurricane Tracking Chart

Claims Log

Insurance Company Special Catastrophe Information Form

Sample Post-Loss Report Letter to Insureds

# PROPERTY LOSS NOTICE

DATE (MM/DD/YYYY)

AGENCY     CONTACT NAME: PHONE (A/C, No, Ext): FAX (A/C, No): E-MAIL ADDRESS: CODE:                      SUBCODE:  AGENCY CUSTOMER ID:	INSURED LOCATION CODE	DATE OF LOSS AND TIME	AM PM
	PROPERTY / HOME POLICY		
	CARRIER	NAIC CODE	
	POLICY NUMBER	LINE OF BUSINESS	
FLOOD POLICY			
CARRIER	NAIC CODE		
WIND POLICY			
CARRIER	NAIC CODE		
POLICY NUMBER			

## INSURED

NAME OF INSURED (First, Middle, Last)				INSURED'S MAILING ADDRESS			
DATE OF BIRTH		FEIN (if applicable)		MARITAL STATUS / CIVIL UNION (if applicable)			
PRIMARY PHONE #	HOME	BUS	CELL	SECONDARY PHONE #	HOME	BUS	CELL
PRIMARY E-MAIL ADDRESS:				SECONDARY E-MAIL ADDRESS:			
NAME OF SPOUSE (First, Middle, Last) (if applicable)				SPOUSE'S MAILING ADDRESS (if applicable)			
DATE OF BIRTH		FEIN (if applicable)		MARITAL STATUS / CIVIL UNION (if applicable)			
PRIMARY PHONE #	HOME	BUS	CELL	SECONDARY PHONE #	HOME	BUS	CELL
PRIMARY E-MAIL ADDRESS:				SECONDARY E-MAIL ADDRESS:			

## CONTACT

CONTACT INSURED							
NAME OF CONTACT (First, Middle, Last)				CONTACT'S MAILING ADDRESS			
PRIMARY PHONE #	HOME	BUS	CELL	SECONDARY PHONE #	HOME	BUS	CELL
WHEN TO CONTACT				PRIMARY E-MAIL ADDRESS:			
				SECONDARY E-MAIL ADDRESS:			

## LOSS

LOCATION OF LOSS				POLICE OR FIRE DEPARTMENT CONTACTED			
STREET:							
CITY, STATE, ZIP:				REPORT NUMBER			
COUNTRY:							
DESCRIBE LOCATION OF LOSS IF NOT AT SPECIFIC STREET ADDRESS:							
KIND OF LOSS	<input type="checkbox"/> FIRE	<input type="checkbox"/> LIGHTNING	<input type="checkbox"/> FLOOD	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	PROBABLE AMOUNT ENTIRE LOSS	
	<input type="checkbox"/> THEFT	<input type="checkbox"/> HAIL	<input type="checkbox"/> WIND				
DESCRIPTION OF LOSS & DAMAGE (ACORD 101, Additional Remarks Schedule, may be attached if more space is required)							
REPORTED BY				REPORTED TO			



**REMARKS (ACORD 101, Additional Remarks Schedule, may be attached if more space is required)**

**Applicable in Alabama:** Any person who knowingly presents a false or fraudulent claim for payment of a loss or benefit or who knowingly presents false information in an application for insurance is guilty of a crime and may be subject to restitution, fines, or confinement in prison, or any combination thereof.

**Applicable in Alaska:** A person who knowingly and with intent to injure, defraud, or deceive an insurance company files a claim containing false, incomplete, or misleading information may be prosecuted under state law.

**Applicable in Arizona:** For your protection Arizona law requires the following statement to appear on this form. Any person who knowingly presents a false or fraudulent claim for payment of a loss is subject to criminal and civil penalties.

**Applicable in Arkansas:** Any person who knowingly presents a false or fraudulent claim for payment of a loss or benefit or knowingly presents false information in an application for insurance is guilty of a crime and may be subject to fines and confinement in prison.

**Applicable in California:** For your protection California law requires the following to appear on this form. Any person who knowingly presents false or fraudulent claim for the payment of a loss is guilty of a crime and may be subject to fines and confinement in state prison.

**Applicable in Colorado:** It is unlawful to knowingly provide false, incomplete, or misleading facts or information to an insurance company for the purpose of defrauding or attempting to defraud the company. Penalties may include imprisonment, fines, denial of insurance and civil damages. Any insurance company or agent of an insurance company who knowingly provides false, incomplete, or misleading facts or information to a policyholder or claimant for the purpose of defrauding or attempting to defraud the policyholder or claimant with regard to a settlement or award payable for insurance proceeds shall be reported to the Colorado Division of Insurance within the Department of Regulatory Agencies.

**Applicable in Delaware:** Any person who knowingly, and with intent to injure, defraud or deceive any insurer, files a statement of claim containing any false, incomplete or misleading information is guilty of a felony.

**Applicable in the District of Columbia:** WARNING: It is a crime to provide false or misleading information to an insurer for the purpose of defrauding the insurer or any other person. Penalties include imprisonment and/or fines. In addition, an insurer may deny insurance benefits if false information materially related to a claim was provided by the applicant.

**Applicable in Louisiana:** Any person who knowingly and with intent to injure, defraud, or deceive any insurer files a statement of claim containing any false, incomplete, or misleading information is guilty of a felony of the third degree.

**Applicable in Hawaii:** Any person who intentionally or knowingly misrepresents or conceals material facts, opinions, intention, or law to obtain or attempt to obtain coverage, benefits, recovery, or compensation commits the offense of insurance fraud which is a crime punishable by fines or imprisonment or both.

**Applicable in Idaho:** Any person who knowingly, and with intent to defraud or deceive any insurance company, files a statement containing any false, incomplete or misleading information is guilty of a felony.

**Applicable in Indiana:** A person who knowingly and with intent to defraud an insurer files a statement of claim containing any false, incomplete, or misleading information commits a felony.

**Applicable in Kansas:** Any person who, knowingly and with intent to defraud, presents, causes to be presented or prepares with knowledge or belief that it will be presented to or by an insurer, purported insurer, broker or any agent thereof, any written, electronic, electronic impulse, facsimile, magnetic, oral, or telephonic communication or statement as part of, or in support of, an application for the issuance of, or the rating of an insurance policy for personal or commercial insurance, or a claim for payment or other benefit pursuant to an insurance policy for commercial or personal insurance which such person knows to contain materially false information concerning any fact material thereto; or conceals, for the purpose of misleading, information concerning any fact material thereto commits a fraudulent insurance act.

**Applicable in Kentucky:** Any person who knowingly and with intent to defraud any insurance company or other person files a statement of claim containing any materially false information or conceals, for the purpose of misleading, information concerning any fact material thereto commits a fraudulent insurance act, which is a crime.

**Applicable in Louisiana:** Any person who knowingly presents a false or fraudulent claim for payment of a loss or benefit or knowingly presents false information in an application for insurance is guilty of a crime and may be subject to fines and confinement in prison.

**Applicable in Maine:** It is a crime to knowingly provide false, incomplete or misleading information to an insurance company for the purpose of defrauding the company. Penalties may include imprisonment, fines or denial of insurance benefits.

**Applicable in Maryland:** Any person who knowingly or willfully presents a false or fraudulent claim for payment of a loss or benefit or who knowingly or willfully presents false information in an application for insurance is guilty of a crime and may be subject to fines and confinement in prison.

**Applicable in Michigan:** Any person who knowingly presents a false or fraudulent claim for payment of a loss or benefit or knowingly presents false information in an application for insurance is guilty of a crime and may be subject to fines and confinement in prison.

**Applicable in Minnesota:** A person who files a claim with intent to defraud or helps commit a fraud against an insurer is guilty of a crime.

**Applicable in Nevada:** Pursuant to NRS 686A.291, any person who knowingly and willfully files a statement of claim that contains any false, incomplete or misleading information concerning a material fact is guilty of a category D felony.

**Applicable in New Hampshire:** Any person who, with a purpose to injure, defraud or deceive any insurance company, files a statement of claim containing any false, incomplete or misleading information is subject to prosecution and punishment for insurance fraud as provided in RSA 638:20.

**Applicable in New Jersey:** Any person who knowingly files a statement of claim containing any false or misleading information is subject to criminal and civil penalties.

**Applicable in New Mexico:** Any person who knowingly presents a false or fraudulent claim for payment of a loss or benefit or knowingly presents false information in an application for insurance is guilty of a crime and may be subject to civil fines and criminal penalties.

**Applicable in New York:** Any person who knowingly and with intent to defraud any insurance company or other person files an application for insurance or statement of claim containing any materially false information, or conceals for the purpose of misleading, information concerning any fact material thereto, commits a fraudulent insurance act, which is a crime, and shall also be subject to a civil penalty not to exceed five thousand dollars and the stated value of the claim for each such violation.

**Applicable in Ohio:** Any person who, with intent to defraud or knowing that he is facilitating a fraud against an insurer, submits an application or files a claim containing a false or deceptive statement is guilty of insurance fraud.

**Applicable in Oklahoma:** WARNING: Any person who knowingly, and with intent to injure, defraud or deceive any insurer, makes any claim for the proceeds of an insurance policy containing any false, incomplete or misleading information is guilty of a felony.

**Applicable in Oregon:** Any person who knowingly and with intent to defraud or solicit another to defraud the insurer by submitting an application containing a false statement as to any material fact may be violating state law.

**Applicable in Pennsylvania:** Any person who knowingly and with intent to defraud any insurance company or other person files an application for insurance or statement of claim containing any materially false information or conceals for the purpose of misleading, information concerning any fact material thereto commits a fraudulent insurance act, which is a crime and subjects such person to criminal and civil penalties.

**Applicable in Puerto Rico:** Any person who knowingly and with the intention of defrauding presents false information in an insurance application, or presents, helps, or causes the presentation of a fraudulent claim for the payment of a loss or any other benefit, or presents more than one claim for the same damage or loss, shall incur a felony and, upon conviction, shall be sanctioned for each violation by a fine of not less than five thousand dollars (\$5,000) and not more than ten thousand dollars (\$10,000), or a fixed term of imprisonment for three (3) years, or both penalties. Should aggravating circumstances [be] present, the penalty thus established may be increased to a maximum of five (5) years, if extenuating circumstances are present, it may be reduced to a minimum of two (2) years.

**Applicable in Rhode Island:** Any person who knowingly presents a false or fraudulent claim for payment of a loss or benefit or knowingly presents false information in an application for insurance is guilty of a crime and may be subject to fines and confinement in prison.

**Applicable in Tennessee:** It is a crime to knowingly provide false, incomplete or misleading information to an insurance company for the purpose of defrauding the company. Penalties include imprisonment, fines and denial of insurance benefits.

**Applicable in Texas:** Any person who knowingly presents a false or fraudulent claim for the payment of a loss is guilty of a crime and may be subject to fines and confinement in state prison.

**Applicable in Virginia:** It is a crime to knowingly provide false, incomplete or misleading information to an insurance company for the purpose of defrauding the company. Penalties include imprisonment, fines and denial of insurance benefits.

**Applicable in Washington:** It is a crime to knowingly provide false, incomplete or misleading information to an insurance company for the purpose of defrauding the company. Penalties include imprisonment, fines and denial of insurance benefits.

**Applicable in West Virginia:** Any person who knowingly presents a false or fraudulent claim for payment of a loss or benefit or knowingly presents false information in an application for insurance is guilty of a crime and may be subject to fines and confinement in prison.

Business: \_\_\_\_\_

Insured: \_\_\_\_\_

Property address: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address (if different): \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Business phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of loss (wind, hail, explosion, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

Date and time of loss: \_\_\_\_\_ Loss estimate: \_\_\_\_\_

Brief description of damaged and property involved

Other insurance: (list agency, policy no., companies, amount)

If emergency handling is requested, explain hardship:

## **CHECK!**

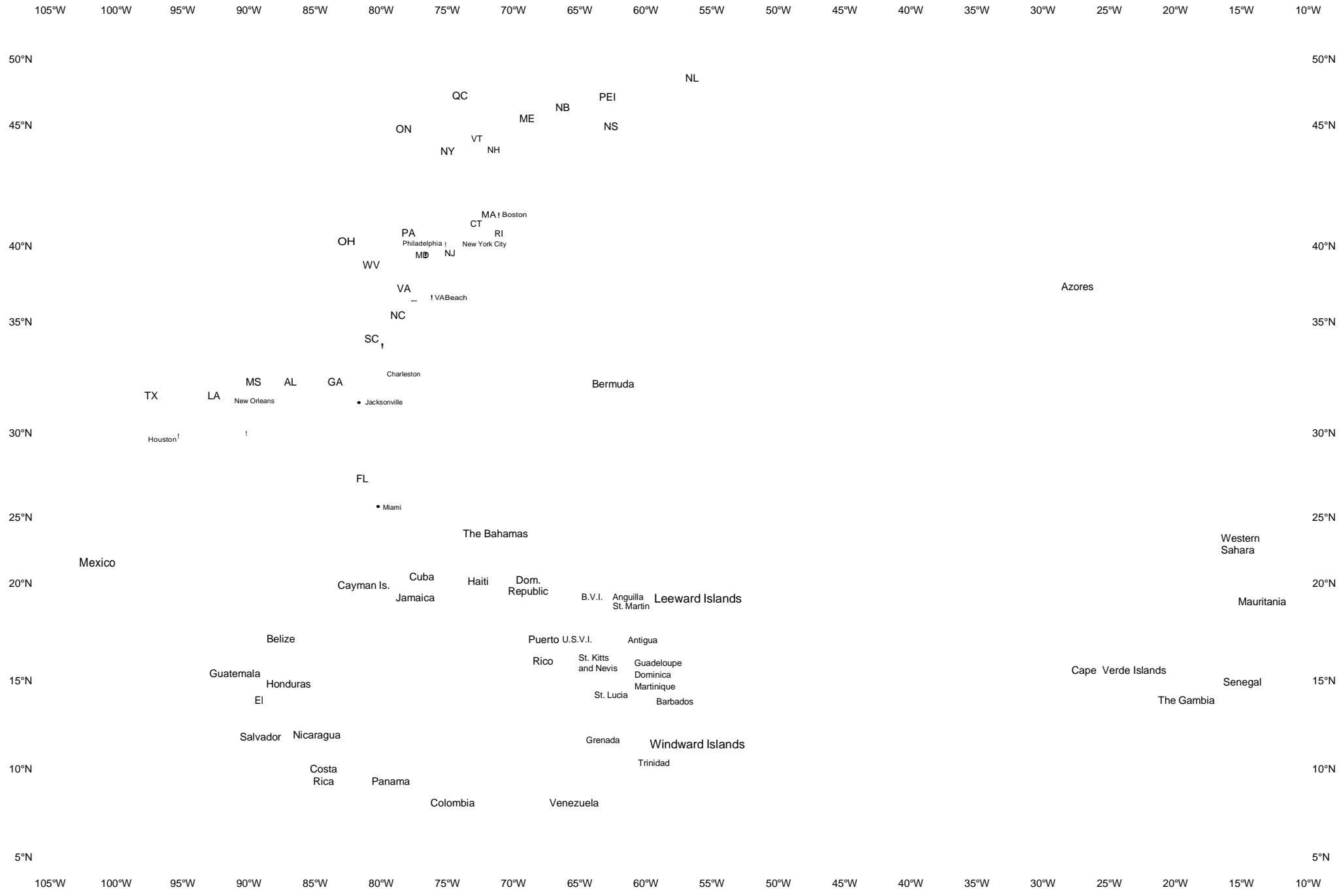
Did you review the following instructions and information with the insured?

- To prevent further damage, have temporary repairs made and keep records of costs.
- Most adjusters are qualified and authorized to prepare their own estimates of routine storm damage. However, if the damage is severe, or if the insured prefers, he may obtain a detailed estimate from a contractor of his choice and hold it for the adjuster.
- Advise insured if a deductible is applicable and request that he withdraw his claim if he finds the damage does not exceed the deductible amount.
- Advise insured that additional adjusters are on the way and adequate facilities will be available. Severe losses causing hardship will receive first attention.
- In case any questions regarding the claim arise, the insured should not hesitate to contact the agent.

Reported by: \_\_\_\_\_ Report taken by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

# Atlantic Basin Hurricane Tracking Chart

## National Hurricane Center, Miami, Florida



# Catastrophe Claims Log


## Insurance Company Special Catastrophe Information form

Company Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Company Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Claims Manager: \_\_\_\_\_

Property Adjuster (Staff): \_\_\_\_\_

Automobile Adjuster (Staff): \_\_\_\_\_

Workers Comp. Adjuster (Staff): \_\_\_\_\_

Adjusting Company (Local): \_\_\_\_\_

Adjusting Company Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Catastrophe Draft Authority**

Homeowners: \_\_\_\_\_

Personal Auto: \_\_\_\_\_

Commercial Auto: \_\_\_\_\_

Commercial Property: \_\_\_\_\_

Hurricane Binding Authority: \_\_\_\_\_

Limitation or Suspension: \_\_\_\_\_

Other Information: \_\_\_\_\_

## SAMPLE POST-LOSS REPORT LETTER TO INSUREDS

**Following is language for a suggested letter for agents to send to an insured after receipt of a catastrophe loss report. It should be prepared on the agency's letterhead.**

Dear (Customer):

The report of damage to your property caused by the hurricane is acknowledged. We have forwarded the necessary written report to (name of adjusting organization, address and phone number) and a representative will contact you as soon as possible.

You should arrange for temporary repairs needed to protect your property from further damage. The bill for any such necessary repairs should be held by you pending arrival of the adjuster and the cost will be included in your claim. Contractors' estimates for permanent repairs may not be necessary unless there is extensive damage, since the adjuster can make estimates using prevailing cost figures of local contractors and repair shops. It is, of course, your privilege to obtain detailed estimates from a contractor of your choice before settling the loss. We feel, however, that the adjuster is capable of arriving at a fair settlement and also think this procedure will expedite loss settlements. If you do secure estimates, please hold them for the adjuster.

In a catastrophe such as this, the facilities of all insurance companies are taxed to an unusual degree because of the thousands of losses that have suddenly occurred. The companies this agency represents have augmented their local facilities by bringing in adjusters from other parts of the country to expedite loss adjustment work. Your loss will receive attention as soon as possible.

Your understanding and cooperation in this trying situation is greatly appreciated. Do not hesitate to get in touch with us about any questions concerning your loss.

Sincerely,

(Agent signature)