

December 26, 2011

Insurers assisting Christmas Day storm victims

Victorians whose homes, businesses and vehicles were damaged by yesterday's storms should contact their insurance company to enable their claims to be assessed as quickly as possible.

Insurance Council of Australia CEO Rob Whelan said insurance companies had been inundated with calls, and had handled more than 1000 inquiries by noon on Boxing Day. He said insurers were helping policyholders make claims.

Mr Whelan said insurers would send assessors out to affected areas in the next few days to review the damage, but it would take several days to quantify its full impact, especially with more wild weather forecast and the potential for further damage.

"Many Victorians will be feeling the hangover from the Christmas storms for some time," he said. "Insurance losses could be in the tens of millions of dollars though it's too early to be precise.

"We are aware more than 3000 properties have experienced damage, and some individual insurance companies have already received many hundreds of inquiries about damage to homes, businesses and vehicles.

"Australia's insurers are there to help property owners recover from the damage caused by this wild weather as swiftly as they can. Once their property is considered safe, owners should check with their insurer before they authorise or commence any major repairs."

Mr Whelan said many insurers were calling staff in from their holidays to cope with the large number of telephone inquiries, and he urged policyholders to remain patient as companies dealt with a backlog of calls.

The Insurance Council encourages policyholders to:

- Contact your insurance company as soon as you can, and seek advice about the claim process under your policy, as well as what you're covered for. Many insurers have 24-hour call centres
- Don't be concerned if insurance documents are not readily at hand. Insurance companies keep records electronically and require only the policyholders' name and address to find a policy
- Speak to your insurer before authorising repairs. Emergency repairs should only be undertaken in the first instance to make the property safe
- Make an inventory of possessions damaged as a result of the storm. This will help insurers process your claim

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- Insurance policies vary. It is important to check what you are covered for and what you are not covered for
- If you're not sure about which insurer you're with, or have general inquiries about the claims process, call the ICA disaster hotline on **1800 734 621**.

Radio newsrooms: a prerecorded audio interview is available.

Please contact 0432 121 116.