



April 2024 Newsletter

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Why is my claim taking so long?

The January 2024 storms in our area caused fatalities, fallen trees, power outages, and significant property damage. On January 18, 2024, Governor Tina Kotek declared a state of emergency for Oregon. Insurance companies deemed the storms as catastrophic events.

In the months following the storms, the number of claims filed was extraordinary. Although winter has now turned to spring, the destruction caused by these storms continues to disrupt lives. In many cases people still do not have their property repaired.

Please know insurance adjustment teams are working feverishly to complete the backlog of claims. The adjusters brought to our area after the storm are now working their usual load, plus the increased backlog of storm claims. If your association has an open claim because of these storms, it is important to know the process will not move as fast as a regular claim.

Additionally, other factors are slowing the process. First, the insurance industry is experiencing a shortage of claims adjusters. Many adjusters have retired or left the workforce and agencies are trying to replace them. Second, the current labor shortage has contractors scrambling for additional workers which hinders the estimate and repair process. Finally, the cost of building materials has increased and that too has impacted the process.

At the beginning of the claims process it is important for the association to appoint one person to work with adjusters, contractors, and unit owners. This individual will organize and manage all claim documentation, estimates, and invoices, follow up with adjusters and contractors for updates, and keep the involved unit owners informed. Typically, this person will be a manager or Board member.

As a broker we can help answer questions regarding the process.

Keep an eye on what you fry



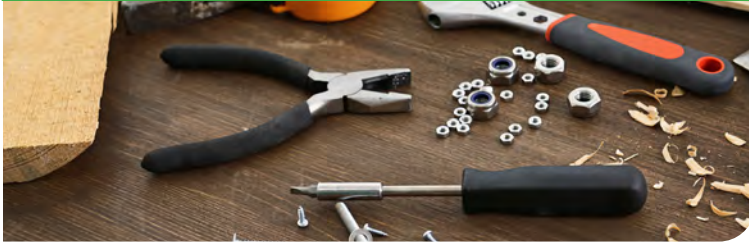
Nearly two-thirds of all kitchen fires start on the range or cook top. To prevent fires in your kitchen, don't leave food unattended on burners or the stove top, especially if you are frying food. If you must step away from the stove or leave the kitchen, turn off the heat or flame and remove the pan from the burner. Keep food packaging, wooden spoons and dish towels, mitts, and other fabrics—including your clothing—away from the cooking surface.

If food on the stove does ignite, cover the pan with a lid and turn off the stove. Never try to extinguish a kitchen fire with water. If the flames are unmanageable, leave the unit or home and call 9-1-1 immediately. Make sure others in the home exit as well.

Grease and food particles that collect in range hoods and stove vents also can be a kitchen fire hazard. The National Air Duct Cleaners Association (NADCA) recommends inspecting and cleaning residential kitchen exhausts twice a year. Shared vent ducts in condominiums should be inspected by a professional. To find a professional near you visit <http://nadca.com>.

For more information on kitchen fires and how to prevent them, visit the National Fire Protection Association at <https://www.nfpa.org/Education-and-Research/Home-Fire-Safety/Cooking>.

Loss prevention: The importance of interior unit maintenance



While an association maintains common areas and buildings, the unit owners are responsible for maintaining their condominium units.

All homes require maintenance and condominiums are no exception. Regular upkeep improves the property value and, in some cases, reduces the likelihood of a claim. Improper or ignored maintenance can cause problems. Sometimes maintenance issues can spread to other units and result in one claim or more. In a community association, 70% of claims filed are for damage related to water and 90% of those claims are caused by activity inside the unit.

Spring is a great time to do a maintenance check on your condominium and identify potential issues. In some cases, problems caught early can save an owner money and help avoid a claim.

Below is a maintenance overview checklist. It is not all-inclusive. For full care instructions, refer to the manufacturer's suggested use and care instructions for each item listed.

- **HVAC systems.** Check and replace air filters in HVAC systems every three months. Schedule regular professional inspections.
- **Windows and doors.** Check the seals around windows and doors. If you notice water around a window or door, consult a service provider.
- **Smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.** Check batteries in units and replace them if necessary. Replace smoke detector units about every 10 years. Replace carbon monoxide detectors about every 5-7 years. Refer to the back of the unit for an expiration date.
- **Faucets, toilets, and tubs.** Inspect for leaks or water damage. Generally, replace toilets every 10-15 years. Replace toilet valves, levers, and flappers about every 4-5 years.
- **Water hoses.** Replace water hoses for dishwashers, washing machines, and ice makers every three to five years. Consider installing water sensors. These devices detect the presence of water and can help prevent water damage. They can be purchased from home improvement stores.
- **Dryer vents.** Lint buildup in a dryer vent can pose a fire threat. Inspect and clean dryer vents at least once a year.
- **Hot water heaters.** Drain a hot water heater at least once a year. Inspect the unit for leaks, corrosion, or loose connections.
- **Bathroom fans and stove vents.** Clean bathroom fans once or twice a year depending on usage. Remove grease buildup from kitchen vents and exhausts and clean them thoroughly at least twice a year.

What owners need to know



What is sewer backup and drain overflow coverage and why do I need it?

Backup of sewer and drain overflow is one of six important coverages on an HO6 policy. Years ago, carriers automatically included this coverage. However, in the last few years we have seen carriers reduce or exclude it altogether.

Unit owners need to pay close attention to this coverage on their HO6 policy, especially now that deductibles under many associations' policies are reaching up to \$50,000.

In most cases, unit owners are responsible for the damage inside their unit up to the association's deductible. In the event of a sewer backup or drain overflow, the unit owner may not have enough coverage for damages in their unit if the HO6 policy limits are less than the amount of the association's deductible.

Often sewer backup and drain overflow is an endorsement within the policy and typically not outlined in the declarations. We recommend owners ask their insurance agent to add sewer and drain overflow to their policy. In addition, owners need to confirm with their agent the coverage amount needed and ensure that amount is at least equal to the association's deductible.

We Want Your Input!

Have a question or want to see a specific topic highlighted in next month's newsletter?

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