



DEPARTMENT OF FINANCIAL REGULATION
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DFR Disaster Guidance – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1) What should I do if my home, business, auto, or other property has been flooded or sustained other damage?

- Contact your insurance agent or insurance company as soon as possible to file a claim to determine if you have coverage. Specifically, ask your insurance company if you have coverage for property damage, loss of personal property, business income, debris removal, or extra expense. Ask what to expect so that you understand the process and the timeline.
- Only your insurance company will determine what is covered and not covered by your policy.
- If you determine you do not have coverage, see below for additional options.
- Report damage [via Vermont 211](#) so the State can provide aggregated information to FEMA to help obtain disaster relief funding.

2) Do I have to wait for my insurance company to see the damage before cleaning up?

You should take steps to mitigate any further damage and may begin the clean-up process right away. However, it is important that you document the damage prior to clean-up. Be sure to take lots of photos and either email them to yourself or upload them to a backup site (iCloud, Google, OneDrive, etc.). You should also create an inventory of damaged property. Include make/model/serial number if possible and/or copies of any purchase receipts if available.

3) Is there a deadline for filing a flood insurance claim?

- The deadline for filing an NFIP claim is September 12, 2023. To file a claim visit the [NFIP website](#) or call the NFIP Call Center at (877) 336-2627.
- If you have a private flood insurance policy, check with your agent or insurance company for deadlines.

4) Do I need to file an insurance claim if my policy does not provide coverage?

- YES, individuals should file an insurance claim because you will need a proof of denial to apply for disaster relief from FEMA.
- Ask your insurer to send the denial via email.

5) Can I apply for FEMA disaster relief if I have flood insurance?

YES, individuals may be eligible for disaster relief from FEMA even if they have flood insurance. Please refer to FEMA FloodSmart.gov. Note that businesses are not eligible for FEMA relief but may be eligible for Small Business Administration disaster assistance loans [Home \(sba.gov\)](http://Home (sba.gov)).

6) How do I clean up my property and remediate mold?

- For information on documenting damage and clean up, please see [FEMA's Floodsmart website](#).

For information on mold remediation after flooding, please visit [EPA.gov](#)

7) My business sustained significant damage and I don't have flood insurance, what resources are available to me?

The Agency of Commerce and Community Development has set up a [Resource Center](#) which can help you identify resources that you may need. In addition, you may qualify for a federally subsidized [SBA Business Physical Disaster Loan](#) for losses to your property or for an [SBA Economic Injury Disaster Loan](#) for your loss of income due to the disaster.

8) How long will my flood insurance claim take?

When you file your claim, ask your adjuster what to expect in terms of process and timeline but here are some general guidelines:

- For NFIP policies, generally an adjuster will contact you within 48 hours and the inspection will be completed within 15 days from when the adjuster contacts you. NFIP requests that if you have concerns about the responsiveness of their adjusters, please speak with a supervisor. If all attempts to work with supervisors are not successful, please call or email the Department of Financial Regulation Insurance Consumer Services team at 800-964-1784 or dfr.insuranceinfo@vermont.gov.
- For private flood policies, regulatory timeframes require that the adjuster mail or orally acknowledge receipt of the claim notice directly to the claimant within (10) business days, and within (15) days after proof of loss is received, you should be advised of the acceptance or denial of the claim by the insurer. If the insurer needs more time to make their determination, it shall notify you within that (15) business days. That said, most adjusters are going to be as responsive as possible. For private flood, if you feel that there have been delays exceeding these timeframes, please contact the Department of Financial Regulation Insurance Consumer Services team at 800-964-1784 or dfr.insuranceinfo@vermont.gov

9) What do I do if the amount recovered from my insurance and/or FEMA is not enough to cover my damages?

- Resources and/or grant funding may be available from other community organizations. For additional information refer to the [Flood Resources | Vermont.gov](#)
- Homeowners, renters, personal property owners and businesses may be eligible for disaster assistance loans from the Small Business Administration at [SBA disaster assistance](#).

10) Why doesn't my homeowner's insurance cover flood damage?

As homeowners' insurance evolved, insurers found that flood damage was too difficult to accurately predict and adequately and fairly price within their policies. As nearly all homeowner's insurance policies excluded flood as a covered peril, the federal government

formed the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) within FEMA to provide this coverage. Over time, a private flood insurance market has evolved, and flood insurance is available for some through commercially available insurance companies.

11) How do I know if my water damage is considered flooding?

Generally, if the water infiltrated your home or business from the ground, it is considered flooding. In terms of a flood insurance policy, the NFIP defines flooding as, “A general and temporary condition of partial or complete inundation of two or more acres of normally dry land area or of two or more properties (at least one of which is your property) from:

- Overflow of inland or tidal waters;
- Unusual and rapid accumulation or runoff of surface waters from any source;
- Mudflow; or
- Collapse or subsidence of land along the shore of a lake or similar body of water as a result of erosion or undermining caused by waves or currents of water exceeding anticipated cyclical levels that result in a flood as defined above.”

12) Water backed up into my basement from the drain, is this covered by homeowners’ insurance?

Some homeowners’ insurance policies have endorsements for coverage of water damage from the backup of a sewer or drain, so depending on the circumstances of how water infiltrated your basement, and the language of your policy, you may have coverage. It would be best to document the source as best you can, as well as the damage sustained, and then reach out to your insurer to file a claim. This will start the process for you and help determine if you have coverage through your policy.

13) I don’t have damage, but my business is shut down due to road access, can I make a business interruption claim on my business policy?

You can report the loss to your insurer or agent; however, business interruption and contingent business interruption require a physical loss due to a covered peril and often exclude losses due to flood. However, you may qualify for a federal [SBA Business Physical Disaster Loan](#) for losses to your property or for an [SBA Economic Injury Disaster Loan](#) for your loss of income due to the disaster.

14) My home was not flooded but has been damaged from a landslide. Will my homeowners insurance provide coverage?

The standard homeowners insurance policy excludes damages caused directly by earth movement, which includes earthquake, landslide, mudslide, mudflow, subsidence and sinkhole. Some insurers offer an optional endorsement which adds limited coverage for earth movement. You should reach out to your insurer and agent to discuss potential coverage.