

Bach Talk: Skyfall(out) - Aerial photos impacting property insurance



One of the tools property insurance companies are using to screen potential and existing customers are aerial images captured by satellites and drones of homes, surroundings and roof conditions. When the images show damage or hazards, they can trigger a non-renewal or rejected application.

This practice has opened a nationwide debate over whether this practice is fair and whether we need regulatory and/or legislative limits on insurers' ability to take or use aerial images. To our knowledge, insurers are legally permitted to use these images as the basis for dropping, accepting or rejecting customers in every state across the country, and are not required to provide copies of images to their customers or alert them that the images exist.

United Policyholders offers the following consumer tips:

If an insurance company sends you a non-renewal notice or rejects your application for a new policy, ask

them in writing to show you the specific underwriting rule that disqualifies you. Ask them if they're basing their decision on aerial images and if so, request copies of the images. Ask them what steps you can take to address the conditions that disqualify you. Ask them give you enough time to complete those steps. Ask them to confirm that they'll offer you a new or renewal policy once you provide documentation that the work is complete.

United Policyholders is asking regulators and lawmakers to consider putting regulations and/or legislation in place to:

- A) Require an insurer to provide a consumer with copies of date-stamped images of their home that show conditions that are out of compliance with the insurer's underwriting guidelines and/or impact the property's risk score, what factors go into that score, and what steps the consumer can take to reverse the insurer's decision.**
- B) Require an insurer to provide an appeal process so the consumer can correct any errors (e.g. "that's not damaged roof tiles - that's my solar panel" or "that's not my home/address" or "There's a fire hydrant/station very close to my home that you didn't factor in"...))**
- C) Require an insurer to give the consumer a reasonable time period to cure the defects/conditions underlying the non-renewal or new application rejection.**
- D) Require an insurer to offer a new or renewal policy to a consumer who submits proof that they've cured the defects/conditions identified in A), above.**