

[Family Deals With Fire Aftermath, Insurance Issues](http://www.10news.com/news/17764517/detail.html)

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SAN DIEGO — Lee and Shirley Taylor aren't alone.

They are victims of the October wildfires that destroyed their Ramona home. They're also underinsured.

"That was our request, insure us against total loss," said Lee Taylor. He said his agent handed him a 108-page insurance policy he believed fully insured his home and 8-acre avocado farm. After the fires, he learned that wasn't the case and he was underinsured by at least \$350,000.

"Frankly, when we called them after the fires and asked why we were so underinsured, they said gosh we hate to hear that. You hate to hear that, we hate to hear that," said Lee.

Now the Taylors said they're talking to their insurance provider, Allied Insurance, and hoping to come to an agreement.

Karen Reimus is with a non-profit group called United Policyholders. The group helps wildfire victims understand insurance issues.

"The problem is most people don't realize they are underinsured," said Reimus. The same thing happened to her in 2003, as the Cedar Fire destroyed her home, and when she went to rebuild she was underinsured.

"We thought we were fully covered," she said. "We had brand new policy with extended replacement with one of the best insurance companies in the U.S."

She said it's like a flashback now of 2003 because it's as if nothing has changed.

United Policyholders surveyed 274 victims of the 2007 October wildfires in San Diego and San Bernardino Counties and say 75 percent of them were underinsured by an average of \$240,000.

“Most people are underinsured and don’t know it because they relied on company to set limits, and it didn’t do it correctly,” said Reimus.

Harvey Levine is a San Diego attorney that handles many insurance cases. He said it’s time homeowners take a more commanding role.

“The trusting days are over,” Levine said. He suggests getting a contractor or an estimator into your home to help figure out how much it would cost to rebuild in the event of a total loss. He warns that many insurance policies are misleading.

“You see replacement value plus 25 percent. You figure your insurance company knows what it will take to replace your home. Sometimes it’s two to three hundred thousand dollars under. It’s devastating,” Levine said.

The Taylors say it’s a good idea to write your insurance agent a letter asking them to confirm that your home is fully protected. This way there’s proof in writing.