

## [Insured see climbing rates, as coverage declines](http://www.marketplace.org/topics/economy/insured-see-climbing-rates-coverage-declines)

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Hurricanes, wildfires, hail storms: all the wild weather the past few years is taking a toll on homeowners' insurance rates. Many premiums are up 10 percent or more this year. And you may be getting less for your money.

Merle Scheiber filed his first-ever hail claim this summer when a storm pummeled his roof.

"I actually got to experience first hand dealing with the insurance company," Scheiber said.

Scheiber is not your typical insurance customer. He's South Dakota's Insurance regulator. He didn't have any surprises dealing with the company, but like many of us, even he says he doesn't look at the policy when it comes in the mail.

"I know pretty much what's in it," he said. "But no, I don't even read mine when I get it."

And, if he doesn't, what about the rest of us? Many will just notice the bill.

"One thing that will get consumers screaming loudly is a rate increase," said Amy Bach, who heads the consumer group United Policyholders. She said that's why many companies are changing what they cover, trying to keep premiums down, even as the policy itself is less valuable. "Reducing coverage in legalese is something most consumers will miss."

So, that mold coverage you thought you had? It might be gone. Hail damage? Your deductible for that might be higher. Instead of replacing your wood floors with the same quality, now you might just get what's available.

Daniel Schwarcz studies the industry at the University of Minnesota, and he says policies are being

“hollowed out.” “Usually people don’t even find out they have less coverage until they end up having a claim and get denied coverage on that basis.”

“They’ll put something that’s clearly stated in writing so that the policyholders should understand what the changes in the policy are,” said Jeanne Salvatore of the Insurance Information Institute. She said the companies aren’t trying to hide anything, and that customers should ask if they’re not sure what the changes mean. That way, you won’t be left with less coverage than you thought.